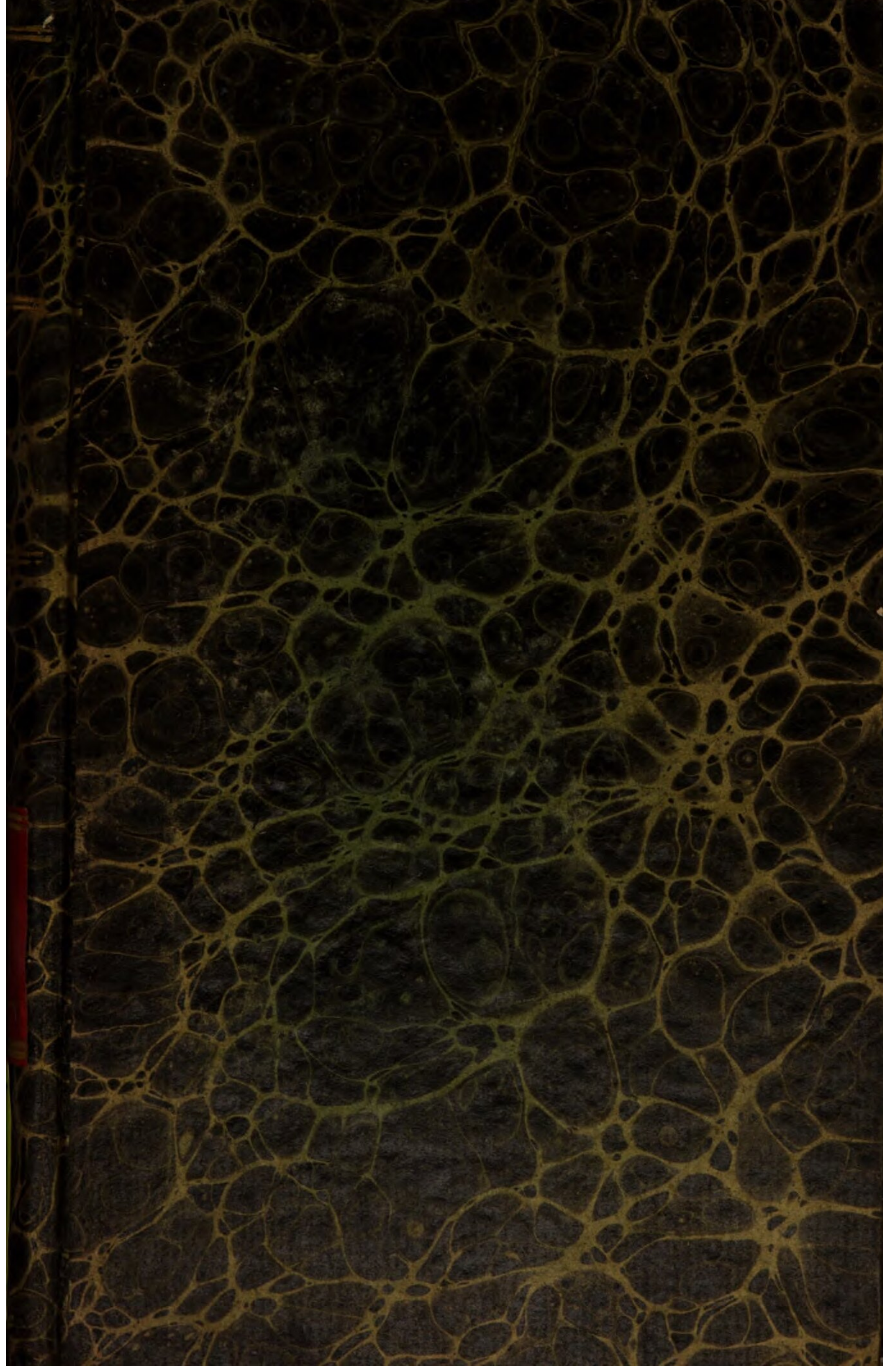




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SACRED HISTORY,

SELECTED FROM

THE SCRIPTURES;

WITH

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS,

PARTICULARLY CALCULATED

TO FACILITATE THE STUDY

OF THE

HOLY SCRIPTURES

IN

SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES.

SIXTH EDITION.

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By MRS. TRIMMER.

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RECORDED FROM

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BY THE REV. GEORGE BURTON

TO FACILITATE THE STUDY

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SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES

IN THE DIVISION

OF THE

BY MRS. TRIMMER



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CONTENTS

TO VOL. III.

S ECT. I. David's power increases. Joab kills Abner. David mourns for Abner.	page 1
Sect. II. Ish-bosheth is slain by Baanah and Rechab. David revengeth his death.	6
Sect. III. David is anointed king over all Israel. Public rejoicings.	8
Sect. IV. David takes Zion. Makes an alliance with Hiram king of Tyre.	13
Sect. V. David defeats the Philistines at Baal Perazim: A memorable instance of self-denial.	17
Sect. VI. David again defeats the Philistines.	21
Sect. VII. David fetches the ark from Kirjath-jearim with great rejoicings. Uzza struck dead for touching it. The ark is carried to the house of Obed-Edom.	23
Sect. VIII. The ark carried by the priests and Levites to Jerusalem. David danceth before it.	28
Sect. IX. David forms a design to build a house for the Lord. Is encouraged to do so by Nathan the prophet. Nathan	

commanded of God to forbid David's building the house. Blessings promised to his posterity. David's prayer and thanksgiving. - - - - -	page 39
Sect. X. David subdues the Philistines, the Moabites, and other enemies of Israel. - - - - -	43
Sect. XI. David shews great kindness to Mephibosheth, Jona- than's son. - - - - -	47
Sect. XII. David sends ambassadors to Hanun king of the Am- monites. They are ill-treated. A war ensues. Great advantages obtained over the Syrians. - - - - -	50
Sect. XIII. David causes Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba, to be slain in battle. He takes Bathsheba to be his wife. Nathan the prophet sent to reprove David for his wickedness. David repents with deep contrition - - -	52
Sect. XIV. David's child is struck with sickness. David's la- mentation. His resignation to the will of God. - - -	59
Sect. XV. David subdues the Ammonites. - - - - -	62
Sect. XVI. Absalom, one of David's sons, kills his brother Amnon. He flees from David. Joab at length prevails on David to receive him. - - - - -	64
Sect. XVII. Absalom forms a conspiracy against his father. David flees from Jerusalem. - - - - -	68
Sect. XVIII. David goes up mount Olivet weeping. Ahitho- phel joins with Absalom. Hushai follows David, but by his desire goes to Absalom. - - - - -	73
Sect. XIX. Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth, by deceit obtains the inheritance of his master. Shimei curses David. - - -	78
Sect. XX. Hushai defeats the counsels of Ahithophel. Amasa is made general instead of Joab by Absalom. - - - - -	82
Sect. XXI. Succours are brought to king David. He gives a charge concerning his son Absalom. Absalom is hanged in an Oak. Joab kills him. The king laments his death. - - - - -	90

CONTENTS.

Sect. XXII. Joab reproves the king for his immoderate grief. David ceases to lament the death of Absalom. He returns to Jordan, and is met by the tribe of Judah.	page 96
Sect. XXIII. The king pardons Shimei. He passes over Jordan.	102
Sect. XXIV. A contest between the tribes concerning conducting the king to Jerusalem. A rebellion ensues. David returns to his house. Mephibosheth meets the king and is reconciled.	104
Sect. XXV. Amasa made general by David. He is slain by Joab. Sheba slain. The rebellion quelled.	107
Sect. XXVI. A famine in Israel on account of the Gibeonites. Wars with the Philistines.	110
Sect. XXVII. David numbers the people. A pestilence ensues. David purchases the threshing-floor of Onan. He builds an altar there. The pestilence is stopped.	115
Sect. XXVIII. David makes preparations towards building the temple. He instructs Solomon his son concerning it, and gives a charge to the princes.	119
Sect. XXIX. Adonijah proclaimed king by Abiathar. Nathan the prophet, by David's command, anoints Solomon and proclaims him. The people accept him. Adonijah flees to the altar.	123
Sect. XXX. David makes preparations towards the temple. Commands Solomon to build it. Charges the princes to assist him. Solemn sacrifices offered.	130
Sect. XXXI. David gives a charge to Solomon his son and dies.	137
Sect. XXXII. A retrospective view of the life of king David as the man after God's own heart.	142
Sect. XXXIII. Solomon begins his reign. Adonijah is put to death. Abiathar is removed from the high priest's office. Joab put to death. Shimei slain.	147

Sect. XXXIV. Solomon's sacrifices at Gibeon. His dream. He prays for wisdom. - - - - -	page 153
Sect. XXXV. Solomon's instructions concerning the value of wisdom. - - - - -	161
Sect. XXXVI. Solomon's wise judgment between two women.	163
Sect. XXXVII. Solomon's great wisdom. His princes. The daily provisions of his household. The extent of his kingdom. His wonderful power and riches. -	165
Sect. XXXVIII. Hiram, king of Tyre, sends to congratulate Solomon. They make an alliance. - - - - -	169
Sect. XXXIX. The building of Solomon's temple. -	173
Sect. XL. The dedication of the temple. - - -	179
Sect. XLI. Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple. He blesses the congregation. The Lord sends fire from heaven. - - - - -	184
Sect. XLII. The Lord gives a testimony of his accepting So- lomon's prayer. Solomon appoints the courses of the priests, &c. - - - - -	196
Sect. XLIII. Solomon builds a house for himself. The house of Lebanon. The house for his queen, Pharaoh's daugh- ter. His throne, &c. - - - - -	198
Sect. XLIV. The queen of Sheba pays a visit to Solomon. His great wisdom, power, and riches. - - - - -	203
Sect. XLV. Solomon multiplies wives to himself. He wor- ships idols. God threatens to rend the kingdom from his son. A prophet in the name of the Lord gives ten tribes to Jeroboam. Solomon dies. - - - - -	206
Sect. XLVI. The Israelites assemble to crown Rehoboam the son of Solomon. Ten tribes revolt to Jeroboam, and make him king over Israel. Rehoboam reigns over Judah. War betwixt the divided kingdoms. - - - - -	214
Sect. XLVII. The reign of Jeroboam king of Israel. He sets up two golden calves. He offers incense. His hand is withered,	

withered, but restored on his repentance. Ahijah prophesies destruction to the house of Jeroboam.	page 222
Sect. XLVIII. The reign of Abijam king of Judah. War between him and Jeroboam. The Lord assists Abijam.	229
Sect. XLIX. The reigns of Nadab and Baasha, kings of Israel. They sin against the Lord. A prophecy against the house of Baasha.	232
Sect. L. The reign of Asa king of Judah. He is helped of the Lord. He makes a league with Benhadad king of Syria. A prophet sent to reprove him.	235
Sect. LI. The wicked reigns of Elah, Zimri, and Omri.	242
Sect. LII. The beginning of the reign of Jehoshaphat king of Judah. The Lord helpeth him.	245
Sect. LIII. The beginning of the reign of Ahab king of Israel; and the history of Elijah the prophet. Ahab marries Jezebel; and brings idols into Jerusalem. Elijah sent to him to prophesy that there would be a drought. Elijah fed by ravens at the brook Cherith.	247
Sect. LIV. Elijah commanded to go to Zerephath. He meets with a widow. Her barrel of meal and cruse of oil are multiplied. She sustains the prophet. Her son is restored to life.	250
Sect. LV. Elijah is sent to Ahab to foretel rain. He assembles the people of Israel, and the prophets of Baal, to prove who is THE GOD. The prophets of Baal slain.	258
Sect. LVI. Rain sent. Jezebel seeks to kill Elijah. He flees to Bethsheba. He desponds. An angel comforts him. The Lord reveals himself by a small still voice. Elijah is sent to anoint Jehu to be king, and Elisha to be a prophet. Elisha follows Elijah.	266
Sect. LVII. Benhadad king of Syria makes war against Ahab. The Syrians defeated.	273
Sect. LVIII. The Syrians return and are again defeated. Ahab desires the vineyard of Naboth. Jezebel causes Naboth to	be

- be put to death. Elijah prophesies the destruction of Jezebel, and the whole house of Ahab. - - - page 275
- Sect. LIX. Ahab and Jehoshaphat form an alliance. False prophets deceive Ahab. Micaiah prophesies against them. He is imprisoned. Ahab slain. - - - 280
- Sect. LX. Jehoshaphat reproved for making alliance with Ahab. He brings the people back to their duty, and reforms the corruptions of public worship. - 287
- Sect. LXI. Jehoshaphat makes an alliance with Ahaziah king of Israel. They send trading vessels to Tarshish and Ezion-geber. - - - 289
- Sect. LXII. The wicked reign of Ahaziah king of Israel. His fall from a lattice. Elijah prophesies his death. Elijah calls for fire from heaven upon those who were sent to destroy him. Ahaziah dies. - - - 290
- Sect. LXIII. Elijah the prophet taken up to heaven in a fiery chariot. Elisha receives his mantle. Succeeds him in his prophetic office. - - - 295
- Sect. LXIV. Elisha heals the waters of Jericho. He is mocked by the children of Bethel. They are slain by bears. 302
- Sect. LXV. The beginning of the reign of Jehoram, or Joram, king of Israel. He makes an alliance with Jehoshaphat king of Judah. They go against the Moabites. - 305
- Sect. LXVI. The conclusion of the reign of Jehoshaphat king of Judah. A great victory over the Moabites and Ammonites. A solemn thanksgiving. Jehoshaphat dies. 310
- Sect. LXVII. Naaman the Syrian general goes to Elisha the prophet. He is cured of his leprosy. Gehazi the servant of Elisha is struck with leprosy. - - - 316
- Sect. LXVIII. The reign of Jehoram king of Israel continued. Ben-hadad king of Syria seeks to destroy Elisha. His people are struck with blindness. - - - 321
- Sect. LXIX. Ben-hadad besieges Samaria. A famine in Samaria. The Syrians defeated. Great spoils taken. 325
- Sect. LXX. The widow's oil multiplied. The son of the Shunamite raised to life at the prayer of Elisha. Deadly pottage

pottage healed. Barley loaves multiplied. The lost axe restored.	page 331.
Sect. LXXI. Ben-hadad sends a message to Elisha. Elisha foretels his death, and the succession of Hazael. Ben-hadad killed by Hazael.	339
Sect. LXXII. The wicked reign of Jehoram king of Judah. He slays all his brethren. The Edomites revolt. He dies miserably.	343
Sect. LXXIII. The wicked reign of Ahaziah (called also Azariah and Jehoahaz) king of Judah.	346
Sect. LXXIV. The reign of Jehu king of Israel. Elisha sends one of the children of the prophets to anoint him. Jehoram slain by Jehu. Ahaziah mortally wounded. Jezebel thrown from a window. Dogs lick up her blood.	348
Sect. LXXV. The wicked reign of Athaliah queen of Judah. She destroys all the seed royal except Joash, who is saved in the temple, and concealed by Jehoiada the priest. Joash proclaimed king. Athaliah slain.	356
Sect. LXXVI. The reign of Joash, or Jehoash, king of Judah. Jehoiada dies. Zechariah the son of Jehoiada slain. Hazael king of Syria wars against Judah. Joash dies.	359
Sect. LXXVII. The wicked reign of Jehoahaz king of Israel. The kingdom of Israel reduced. Jehoahaz dies.	362
Sect. LXXVIII. The reign of Jehoash, or Joash, king of Israel. He visits Elisha in his sickness. Elisha dies. The Syrians defeated. Jehoash dies.	364
Sect. LXXIX. The reign of Amaziah king of Judah. He numbers his people. War with the Edomites. War with Israel. Amaziah taken prisoner by Joash. His death.	369
Sect. LXXX. The reign of Jeroboam II. king of Israel. Israel delivered by his hand.	374
Sect. LXXXI. Part of the prophecy of Amos, concerning a famine and an earthquake. The people of Israel called upon to repent.	375
Sect. LXXXII. The reign of Uzziah, or Azariah, king of Judah.	

- Judah. His great prosperity. He burns incense, and is struck with leprosy. His death. - - - page 380
- Sect. LXXXIII. Part of the prophecy of Isaiah. The people of Israel and Judah called upon to forsake their sins, and turn unto the Lord. - - - 383
- Sect. LXXXIV. The reigns of Zachariah and Shallum, kings of Israel. Their death. - - - 385
- Sect. LXXXV. The history of the prophet Jonah. The Lord commands him to go to Nineveh. He disobeys and is swallowed up by a fish. The Lord delivers him. - 387
- Sect. LXXXVI. Jonah again sent to Nineveh. The people repent at his preaching, and are pardoned. Jonah displeased. He is made sensible of his error. - - - 390
- Sect. LXXXVII. The reigns of Menahem, Pekaiah, and Pekah, kings of Israel. Hoshea succeeds to the throne. 393
- Sect. LXXXVIII. Part of the prophecy of Hosea. The prophet foretels the downfall of the kingdom of Israel. He calls upon the people to repent. - - - 396
- Sect. LXXXIX. The reigns of Jotham and Ahaz, kings of Judah. Jotham's great prosperity. The Ammonites become tributary to him. Syria and Ephraim confederate against Judah. Isaiah encourages Ahaz. The miraculous birth of Emanuel predicted. The defeat of the Assyrians foretold, &c. - - - 400
- Sect. XC. The wickedness of Ahaz. Numbers of the people of Judah carried into captivity by the Syrians. - - 405
- Sect. XCI. The impiety of Ahaz. He sends part of the treasure of the Lord's house to the king of Assyria. He setteth up an altar to idols, burns incense thereon, and commits abominations. His death. - - - 407
- Sect. XCII. The beginning of the reign of Hezekiah king of Judah. He cleanses the temple, and reforms public worship. A covenant made with great solemnity. - 411
- Sect. XCIII. Part of the prophecy of Isaiah. The prophet denounces woes against the people of Israel. He invites them to turn unto the Lord. - - - 415

- Sect. XCIV. The reign of Hoshea king of Israel. He becomes tributary to Shalmanezar king of Assyria. Conspires against him. Samaria taken. Hoshea taken prisoner. The Israelites carried into captivity. - - page 417
- Sect. XCV. Continuation of the reign of Hezekiah king of Judah. His piety. He subdues the Philistines. He becomes tributary to Sennacherib king of Assyria. - 419
- Sect. XCVI. Part of the prophecy of Isaiah against Assyria. - 422
- Sect. XCVII. Sennacherib besieges the cities of Judah. Hezekiah is seized with sickness. Isaiah the prophet is sent to warn him to prepare for death. He prays to the Lord, and his life is lengthened. His reflections. - 424
- Sect. XCVIII. Hezekiah's confidence in the Lord. - - 430
- Sect. XCIX. Sennacherib sends a great host against Jerusalem. Rab-shakeh's arrogant speech. - - 432
- Sect. C. Hezekiah's humiliation. Isaiah's message to him. Rab-shakeh's letter. Hezekiah's prayer. - 435
- Sect. CI. God's message to Hezekiah. - - 438
- Sect. CII. The Assyrians smitten by an angel. Sennacherib killed by his sons. - - - 440

417	Sect. XCIV. The reign of Hoshea king of Israel. He becomes tributary to Shalmaneser king of Assyria. Conspiracies against him. Sennacherib taken. Hoshea taken prisoner. The Israelites carried into captivity.
419	Sect. XCV. Continuation of the reign of Hezekiah king of Judah. His piety. He subdues the Philistines. He becomes tributary to Sennacherib king of Assyria.
422	Sect. XCVI. Part of the prophecy of Isaiah against Assyria.
424	Sect. XCVII. Sennacherib besieges the cities of Judah. Hezekiah is seized with sickness. Isaiah the prophet is sent to warn him to prepare for death. His prayer to the Lord, and his life is lengthened. His reflections.
430	Sect. XCVIII. Hezekiah's confidence in the Lord.
432	Sect. XCIX. Sennacherib sends a great host against Jerusalem. Rab-shakeh's arrogant speech.
435	Sect. C. Hezekiah's humiliation. Isaiah's message to him. Rab-shakeh's letter. Hezekiah's prayer.
438	Sect. CI. God's message to Hezekiah.
440	Sect. CII. The Assyrians smitten by an angel. Sennacherib killed by his sons.

SECTION I.

DAVID'S POWER INCREASETH.

ABNER REVOLTETH TO HIM.—JOAB KILLETH ABNER.

DAVID MOURNETH FOR ABNER.

From 2 Samuel, Chap. iii.

AND unto David were born in Hebron six sons, Amnon, Chileab, Absalom, Adonijah, Shephatiah, and Ithream.

And it came to pass while there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, that Abner made himself strong for the house of Saul.

But Abner was very wroth, for the words of Ish-bosheth *had provoked him*, and he said, Am I a dog's head, which against Judah do shew kindness this day unto the house of Saul thy father, to his brethren, and to his friends, and have not delivered thee into the hands of David?

So do God to Abner, and more also, except as the LORD hath sworn to David, even so I do to him: to translate the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beer-sheba.

And Ish-bosheth could not answer Abner a word again, because he feared him.

Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf, saying, Whose is the land? saying also, Make thy league with me, and behold, my hand shall be with thee, to bring about all Israel unto thee.

And David said, Well, I will make a league with thee: but one thing I require of thee, that is, Thou shalt not see my face, except thou first bring Michal, Saul's daughter, when thou comest to see my face.

And David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth Saul's son, saying, Deliver me my wife Michal, which I espoused.

And Ish-bosheth sent, and took her from her husband, even from Phaltiel the son of Laish.

And her husband went with her along weeping behind her to Bahurim: then said Abner unto him, Go, return. And he returned.

And Abner had communication with the elders of Israel, saying, Ye sought for David in times past to be king over you.

Now then do it; for the LORD hath spoken of David, saying, By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies.

And Abner also spake in the ears of Benjamin: and Abner went also to speak in the ears of David in Hebron, all that seemed good to Israel, and that seemed good to the whole house of Benjamin.

So Abner came to David to Hebron, and twenty men with him: and David made Abner, and the men that were with him a feast.

And Abner said unto David, I will arise, and go, and will gather all Israel unto my lord the king, that they may make a league with thee, and that thou mayest reign over all that thine heart desireth. And David sent Abner away; and he went in peace.

And behold the servants of David and Joab came from pursuing a troop, and brought in a great spoil with them: (but Abner was not with David in Hebron, for he had sent him away, and he was gone in peace.) When Joab and all the host that were with him, were come, they told Joab, saying, Abner the son of Ner, came to the king, and he hath sent him away, and he is gone in peace.

Then Joab came to the king, and said, What hast thou done?

done? behold, Abner came unto thee, why is it that thou hast sent him away, and he is quite gone? thou knowest Abner the son of Ner, that he came to deceive thee, and to know thy going out and thy coming in, and to know all that thou doest.

And when Joab was come out from David, he sent messengers after Abner, which brought him again from the well of Sirah; but David knew it not.

And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly: and smote him there under the fifth rib, that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother.

And afterwards when David heard it, he said, I and my kingdom are guiltless before the LORD for ever, from the blood of Abner the son of Ner: let it rest on the head of Joab, and on all his father's house, and let there not fail from the house of Joab one that hath an issue, or that is a leper, or that leaneth on a staff, or that falleth on the sword, or that lacketh bread.

So Joab and Abishai his brother slew Abner, because he had slain their brother Asahel at Gibeon in the battle.

And David said to Joab, and to all the people that were with him, Rend your clothes, and gird you with sackcloth, and mourn before Abner. And king David himself followed the bier.

And they buried Abner in Hebron: and the king lift up his voice, and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept.

And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth? thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put in fetters: as a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou. And all the people wept again over him.

And when all the people came to cause David to eat meat while it was yet day, David sware, saying, So do

God to me, and more also, if I taste bread or aught else till the sun be down.

And all the people took notice of it, and it pleased them: as whatsoever the king did, pleased all the people.

For all the people, and all Israel understood that day that it was not of the king to slay Abner the son of Ner.

And the king said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel.

And I am this day weak, though anointed king; and these men the sons of Zeruiah be too hard for me: the Lord shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The truce which was made between Joab and Abner seems to have been of short continuance; but we do not find that David *himself* went forth to fight against the family of Saul, though there were frequent contests with their followers. Ish-besheth is supposed to have been a person of mean abilities, as he did not attend his father and brethren to the field of battle; and it is imagined that Abner thought to rule the kingdom, by dictating to Ish-bosheth; but when he found that his party declined, and David's was continually increasing, he formed a design of bringing about a revolution, which he had reason to suppose would be very agreeable to the Israelites in general; he therefore took advantage of a trifling affront which Ish-bosheth gave him, and instantly deserted his cause.

The interest of so powerful a man as Abner, was a very desirable acquisition to David: but he placed his dependence on God alone, and therefore would not enter into any league with him, till Michal was restored; for certainly Saul's having given her to another was a great indignity

indignity to David; and it is likely that he had a peculiar affection for her, as it was evident she had for him, by her having hazarded her own life to save his; and perhaps she might have intimated to him, by some means or other, her *desire* to return, which he could scarcely in *honour* deny, as she was the person who had made him a *king's son-in-law*. There is an appearance of cruelty in his distressing Phaltiel; but we must consider, that David only required him to *restore* what he had *no right to keep*, therefore he was not a proper object of pity; and his *silent* sorrow proves, that he knew he had no reason to complain of *injustice* in David's behaviour.

David certainly had a right to make a treaty with Abner, and had he declined it, he would have acted an *unjust* part by the Israelites in general, and the men of Judah in particular, in rejecting an opportunity of uniting those, who had been separated by the unlawful usurpation of Ish-bosheth.*

Abner's fate teaches us, how uncertain are all the purposes of man; he had formed great projects, and promised great things; but behold they were all subverted, and *he died as a fool dieth!* Had he acted from good motives it is likely he would have been successful; but though he knew the determination of God in respect to David's being king, he at first opposed him from selfish and ambitious views, and would not have joined him at all, if he had not been disappointed in them.

Joab's behaviour was treacherous in the greatest degree, and very unbecoming the character of a renowned warrior; *for he shed the blood of war in peace, and in the very gate*, which was the place of judgment; he did it therefore in *defiance of justice*. The curses which David imprecated on Joab, sound very harshly in the ear of a

* See Chandler's and Delany's Life of David.

Christian; but they proceeded from the king's love for his people, as there was cause to fear, that his suffering a murderer to go unpunished in the *land of Israel*, which was so *peculiarly sanctified* by the DIVINE PRESENCE, might bring a *curse on the nation*, for they were commanded not to let a murderer live amongst them; David therefore *devoutly prayed*, that the LORD would *spare him and his people*, and *confine the curse* to Joab, as he could not at that time do the *justice* which God in cases of murder required. The pathetic lamentation, which David uttered for the untimely fate of that great man Abner, convinced the people that he was perfectly innocent of his death.

SECTION II.

BAANAH AND RECHAB SLAY ISH-BOSHETH.

From 2 Samuel, Chap. iv.

AND when Saul's son heard that Abner was dead in Hebron, his hands were feeble, and all the Israelites were troubled,

And Saul's son had two men that were captains of bands: the name of the one was Baanah, and the name of the other Rechab, the sons of Rimmon a Beerothite, of the children of Benjamin; (for Beeroth also was reckoned to Benjamin; and the Beerothites fled to Gittaim, and were sojourners there until this day.)

And Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son that was lame of his feet, and was five years old when the tidings came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel, and his nurse took him up, and fled: and it came to pass as she made haste to flee that he fell, and became lame; and his name was Mephibosheth.

And the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah,

Baanah, went, and came about the heat of the day to the house of Ish-bosheth, who lay on a bed at noon; and they smote him and slew him, and beheaded him, and took his head, and gat them away through the plain all night.

And they brought the head of Ish-bosheth unto David to Hebron, and said to the king, Behold the head of Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, thine enemy, which sought thy life; and the LORD hath avenged my lord the king this day of Saul, and of his seed.

And David said unto them, As the LORD liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity: when one told me, saying, Behold Saul is dead, (thinking to have brought good tidings) I took hold of him, and slew him in Ziklag, who thought that I would have given him a reward for his tidings: how much more, when wicked men have slain a righteous man, in his own house, upon his bed? shall I not therefore now require his blood of your hand, and take you away from the earth?

And David commanded his young men, and they slew them, and cut off their hands and their feet, and hanged them up over the pool in Hebron: but they took the head of Ish-bosheth, and buried it in the sepulchre of Abner, in Hebron.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The Beerothites are supposed to have been Benjamites who after the battle of Gilboa, fled to Beeroth, a city which had formerly belonged to the Gibeonites, but was evacuated by Saul's destroying them.

The Beerothites, who murdered Ish-bosheth, certainly intended to ingratiate themselves with David, by clearing his way to the throne of Israel; but they had either forgotten, or not heard of his treatment of the

Amalekite who boasted of having slain Saul. It was necessary for the vindication of his own character, that David should punish treachery.

Ish-bosheth is mentioned by David as a *righteous person*, and so he might be in respect to Rechab and Baanah, for it does not appear that he had either done or designed them any ill. But he was not the KING appointed by the LORD; therefore David having been anointed by the command of God, was justified in opposing him, and taking all proper measures for recovering his own right. Ish-bosheth certainly had no pretensions to the *throne*, even supposing that he was not satisfied of David's having been chosen by the LORD; because Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, was the *lawful heir*, if the crown had *descended in lineal succession*; Ish-bosheth therefore should in that case have fought for him, and maintained *his* claim, instead of usurping the sovereign power himself.

The *severe* sentence which David pronounced against the murderers of Ish-bosheth proves, that he was desirous to wait till it should please God to bring him to the throne, and that he particularly wished no *violence* might be done to *any* of Saul's family.

SECTION III.

DAVID ANOINTED KING OVER ALL ISRAEL.

THE PEOPLE'S REJOICINGS ON THE OCCASION.

From 2 Samuel, Chap. v. 1 Chron. Chap. xii.

DAVID was thirty years old when he began to reign in Hebron, and he reigned over Judah seven years and six months.

Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh.

Also

Also in times past when Saul was king over us, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and the LORD said to thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel.

So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron, and king David made a league with them in Hebron before the LORD: and they anointed David king over Israel. David was thirty years old when he began to reign.

And these are the numbers of the bands that were ready armed to the war, and came to David to Hebron to turn the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of the LORD.

The children of Judah that bare shield and spear, were six thousand and eight hundred ready armed to the war.

Of the children of Simeon, mighty men of valour for the war, seven thousand and one hundred.

Of the children of Levi, four thousand and six hundred.

And Jehoiada was the leader of the Aaronites, and with him were three thousand and seven hundred.

And Zadok, a young man of mighty valour, and of his father's house twenty and two captains.

And of the children of Benjamin the kindred of Saul three thousand: for hitherto the greatest part of them had kept the ward of the house of Saul.

And of the children of Ephraim, twenty thousand and eight hundred, mighty men of valour, famous throughout the house of their fathers.

And of the half tribe of Manasseh, eighteen thousand which were expressed by name to come and make David king.

And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel

ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred, and all their brethren were at their commandment.

Of Zebulun, such as went forth to battle, expert in war with all instruments of war, fifty thousand which could keep rank; they were not of double heart.

And of Naphtali, a thousand captains, and with them with shield and spear, thirty and seven thousand.

And of the Danites expert in war, twenty and eight thousand and six hundred,

And of Asher such as went forth to battle, expert in war, forty thousand.

And on the other side of Jordan, of the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and of the half tribe of Manasseh, with all manner of instruments of war for the battle, an hundred and twenty thousand.

All these men of war that could keep rank came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel; and all the rest also of Israel were of one heart to make David king.

And there they were with David three days, eating and drinking: for their brethren had prepared for them.

Moreover, they that were nigh them, even unto Issachar, and Zebulun, and Naphtali, brought bread on asses and on camels, and on mules, and on oxen, and meat, meal, cakes of figs, and bunches of raisins, and wine, and oil, and oxen, and sheep, abundantly; for there was joy in Israel.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

David spent seven years and six months at Hebron; and as it appears that he did not take the field during that time, we may conjecture that he employed himself in settling and regulating his ARMY; for we may learn from
different

different parts of scripture*, that he appointed twelve courses of military men for the service of the year, each consisting of 24,000 soldiers, with their proper officers included, to do military duty wherever occasion required one month in every year: It † likewise appears, that the officers of each course were usually the fathers of the principal families of which that course consisted, so that there was little fear of cruelty and oppression on one side, or of disobedience and desertion on the other; and the commanders were naturally engaged to be more diligent in instructing and forming their soldiers, and the soldiers more attentive in learning their duty.

David ‡ had three commanders in chief of the *first* order, *three* of the *second*, *thirty-one* of the *third*, and *thirty* of the *fourth*: Asahel is mentioned as *one* of the chiefs, therefore this regulation of the army must have been established before the battle of Gilboa; and as it is said that "*there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David*," and we read but of little bloodshed, we may presume, that though there might be frequent *skirmishes*, there was no *battle* besides that at Gibeon; and we may suppose, that during the seven years of Ish-bosheth's reign over Israel, David exercised and disciplined his troops, so that at the conclusion of it he had a noble army.

The people of Israel, without a king and leader, were like sheep having no shepherd; and as they were convinced by David's mild and wise government over Judah, that he was deserving of the supreme authority, they were unanimous in choosing him for their sovereign. How highly delightful must it have been to David, to receive the *willing* homage of such multitudes, who at length

* 2 Sam. xxiii.

† 1 Chron. xxvii.

‡ 1 Chron. xi.

acknowledged that he was *the chosen of the LORD*, and worthy to govern them!

The *covenant* which David entered into, is supposed to have been a solemn promise in the name of the LORD, that he would administer justice, and govern agreeably to the *law of God*, given to Moses; and the people bound themselves in the same solemn manner, to obey him as that law required.

Instead of strife and contention, nothing was now heard in Israel but joyful acclamations. Now were those friends reconciled whom civil discord had set at variance; and all the blessings of unanimity presented themselves to the mind. Mirth and festivity filled up the happy hours, and warlike instruments were exchanged for the merry harp and the lute; every countenance was enlivened with gladness, and every tongue invoked blessings on David. “Yet amidst all this rejoicing, there was no luxury or intemperance: nothing but the produce of the earth in its native simplicity; and as David presided, we may reasonably suppose that the feast began and ended with praises and thanksgivings to the LORD.”

It is delightful to read, that David, after all his troubles, was invited to the throne of Israel in so honourable a manner. He certainly had resisted many temptations to gain possession of it by violence; for he was firmly persuaded, that the *promises of God* were *sure*, and the *aid of the LORD* *sufficient*.

In order to make proper reflections on this part of David's history, we should read his Psalms, which shew at once what he thought on these occasions, and what sentiments others should entertain in a state of prosperity.

SECTION IV.

DAVID TAKETH ZION.—MAKETH ALLIANCE WITH
HIRAM, KING OF TYRE*.

WHEN† the Israelites, in the days of Joshua, *cast lots* for their *future* inheritance, Sion fell to Benjamin: soon after Joshua's death, the tribe of Judah took the *lower* city, but the Jebusites still maintained the *fortress*: after the city was *rebuilt*, the children of Judah and Benjamin inhabited it; but they very imprudently suffered the Jebusites to dwell amongst them. In Saul's time, however, the Hebrews dwelt in it (for David carried Goliath's head thither); but it is supposed, that the Jebusites took entire possession of it after the battle of Gilboa. The Israelites certainly had an undoubted right to SION, by the appointment of God; and a man of David's courage and enterprizing spirit, would scarcely suffer so strong a fortress to remain in the hands of one of those people who were devoted by God to destruction: his claim to it was just, and the taking of it necessary to the security and peace of his government and people, he therefore went up against it. The Jebusites supposing the city impregnable treated David with the utmost scorn and contempt, saying that even the *blind* and the *lame* amongst them were able to defend it against his utmost force; and it is thought, that in *derision* they placed such impotent persons on their ramparts, (instead of able soldiers) who perhaps joined in deriding David, and blaspheming the ALMIGHTY God, in whom Israel confided; on which account David expressed his hatred against them, and promised great

* 2 Sam. v.

† Chandler's Life of King David.

rewards to those who should smite the blind and lame. If they were guilty of presumptuous sin, the punishment David inflicted was the just reward of their *presumption*. We cannot suppose that David would inhumanly hate people on account of *natural infirmities*.

It is conjectured, that after this important victory, David composed the following psalm*.

Not unto us, O LORD not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.

Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their GOD?

But our GOD is in the heavens, he hath done whatsoever he pleased.

Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.

They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not.

They have ears, but they hear not; noses have they, but they smell not.

They have hands, but they handle not; feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat.

They that make them, are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.

O Israel, trust thou in the LORD: He is their help and their shield.

O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD; He is their help and their shield.

Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD, He is their help and their shield.

The LORD hath been mindful of us. He will bless us, He will bless the house of Israel, He will bless the house of Aaron.

He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great.

* Ps. cxv. Delany's Life of King David.

The LORD shall increase you more and more, you and your children.

You are blessed of the LORD, which made heaven and earth.

The heaven, even the heavens are the LORD's: but the earth hath He given to the children of men.

The dead praise not the LORD: neither any that go down into silence.

But we will bless the LORD, from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the LORD.

By this psalm we may see the sense which David entertained of God's mercies; and that he imputed his success to the power of the ALMIGHTY.

When David had possessed himself of the strong fortress of Sion, he fixed his residence there, and made it his capital, after he had improved and enlarged it as far as the present state of affairs required: his next care was to *adorn* it, in which the friendship of HIRAM, KING OF TYRE, was very serviceable.

This*prince appears to have been of a magnificent and generous temper, and a believer in the true God, notwithstanding history informs us that he built temples in honour of those idols which the Phœnicians worshipped; perhaps he was converted by David†. Tyre was a city in Phœnicia, lately raised to great wealth, and become a royal city. It abounded with cedar trees, and with men of experience in the arts of building, which the Israelites were at that time unskilled in, as they were used to little besides war and agriculture.

According to ancient authors, Jerusalem was, in the time of David, a very magnificent city; in ‡ the centre of it, on the summit of mount Sion, was David's palace, when the building of this was completed, and he was

* See Universal History. † 1 Kings v. 7. ‡ Chandler's Life of David.
going

going to dwell in it, he is supposed to have penned the following Psalm*.

I will extol thee, O LORD, for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.

O LORD my GOD, I cried unto Thee, and thou hast healed me.

O LORD Thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: Thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.

Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

For His anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life. weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.

LORD, by Thy favour Thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled.

I cried unto thee, O LORD: and unto the LORD I made supplication.

What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? shall the dust praise Thee? shall it declare Thy truth?

Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me: LORD, be Thou my helper.

Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness:

To the end that my glory may sing praise to Thee, and not be silent: O LORD my GOD, I will give thanks unto Thee for ever.

The following Psalm is expressive of David's resolution to observe the utmost integrity in the administration of justice†.

I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O LORD, will I sing.

* Psalm xxx.

† Psalm ci.

I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way ; O when wilt thou come unto me : I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.

I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes : I hate the work of them that turn aside, it shall not cleave to me.

A froward heart shall depart from me : I will not know a wicked person.

Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off : him that hath a high look, and a proud heart, will not I suffer.

Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me : he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.

He that worketh deceit, shall not dwell within my house : he that telleth lies, shall not tarry in my sight.

I will early destroy all the wicked of the land : that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the LORD.

SECTION V.

DAVID SMITETH THE PHILISTINES AT BAAL-

PERAZIM.

2 Sam. Chap. v. 1 Chron. Chap. xii.

BUT when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David ; and David heard of it, and went down to the hold.

The Philistines also came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim.

And David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines ? wilt thou deliver them into mine hand ? And the LORD said unto David, Go up : for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand.

And

And David came to Baal-perazim, and David smote them there, and said, The LORD hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me, as the breach of waters. Therefore he called the name of that place Baal-perazim.

And there they left their images, and David and his men burnt them.

Now three of the thirty captains went down to the rock to David, into the cave of Adullam, and the host of the Philistines encamped in the valley of Rephaim.

And David was then in the hold, and the Philistines garrison was then at Beth-lehem.

And David longed, and said, Oh, that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Beth-lehem that is at the gate; and three of his captains brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of Beth-lehem that was by the gate, and took it and brought it to David; but David would not drink of it, but poured it out to the LORD,

And said, My GOD forbid it me, that I should do this thing: shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy? for with the jeopardy of their lives they brought it. Therefore he would not drink it.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Whilst the Israelites were divided amongst themselves, they were disregarded by the neighbouring nations: but when David was seated on the throne of Israel, and had built and fortified the royal city, after destroying the Jebusites, it is reasonable to suppose, that they all took the alarm, and confederated together with the Philistines, in order to crush his growing power: so that David might well say, *all nations compassed him about.*

The

The vally of Rephaim was to the west of Jerusalem, large and fruitful, capable of containing the numerous hosts, which collected together, must have made a very formidable appearance. David retired to the cave of Adullam, because he was acquainted with its strength, and did not choose to make Jerusalem a scene of blood, if he could by any means prevent its invasion.

Though David had a very powerful army, commanded by heroes of renowned valour, he knew that no *human means* were sufficient to secure him success against his enemies ; therefore, according to his usual piety, and consistent with his character as God's *Vicegerent*, and *CAPTAIN of the LORD's inheritance*, he would not presume to attack the Philistines, till he had enquired the *will of God*. When he was going in consequence of the *Divine command* to encounter the enemy, he is supposed to have animated his troops by repeating the following Psalm*, which, perhaps, was accompanied with warlike music†.

Keep not Thou silence, O GOD: hold not Thy peace, and be not still, O GOD.

For lo, thine enemies make a tumult : and they that hate Thee, have lift up the head.

They have taken crafty counsel against Thy people, and consulted against Thy hidden ones.

They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation ; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.

For they have consulted together with one consent ; they are confederate against Thee.

The tabernacles of Edom and the Ishmaelites : of Moab and the Hagarenes ; Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek, the Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre ;

* Delany's Life of David.

† Psalm lxxxiii.

Assur is also joined with them: they have holpen the children of Lot.

Do unto them as unto the Midianites, as to Sisera, as to Jabin at the brook of Kison;

Which perished at En-dor: they became as dung for the earth.

Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb: yea, all their princes as Zeba and Zalmunna:

Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession.

O my GOD, make them like a wheel: as the stubble before the wind.

As the fire burneth the wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire, so persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm.

Fill their faces with shame: that they may seek thy name, O LORD.

Let them be confounded and troubled for ever: yea, let them be put to shame and perish.

That men may know, that Thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most High over all the earth.

David gained a great victory; but he considered himself only as an humble instrument in the hand of God, for he describes the enemy as an *over-whelming flood* ready to swallow him up; and the armies of his enemies, divided by the power of God, as the mighty waters of the ocean are broken and divided by a storm. On this happy occasion, he is supposed to have uttered the following Psalm*.

If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say;

If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us;

* Psalm cxxiv.

Then

Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us.

Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul.

Then the proud waters had gone over our soul.

Blessed be the LORD, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth.

Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers ; the snare is broken, and we are escaped.

Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

What an instance of affectionate respect did those officers give, who fetched the water from Beth-lehem ! How truly great were David's piety and self-denial ! He looked upon the waters, fetched at the hazard of their lives, as sacred to God, and poured it on the earth as an offering of thanksgiving, though he was suffering the pain of excessive thirst.

SECTION VI.

DAVID SMITETH THE PHILISTINES AGAIN AT THE MULBERRY-TREES.

From 2 Samuel, Chap. v.

AND the Philistines came up yet again, and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim.

And when David enquired of the LORD, he said, Thou shalt not go up : but fetch a compass behind them and come upon them over against the mulberry-trees.

And let it be when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry-trees, that then thou shalt bestir

bestir thyself: for then shall the LORD go out before thee to smite the host of the Philistines.

And David did so, as the LORD had commanded him; and smote the Philistines from Geba, until thou come to Gazer.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Though the Philistines and their allies had received such an overthrow, we find they made another attempt, in which they were miraculously defeated; for a noise was heard by them like the sound of a mighty army in their rear, which struck them with terror, so that David totally defeated them. When David and his victorious army returned back to Jerusalem, it is supposed the following Psalm * was publicly sung †.

O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: because His mercy endureth for ever.

Let Israel now say, that His mercy endureth for ever.

Let the house of Aaron now say, that His mercy endureth for ever.

Let them now that fear the LORD say, that His mercy endureth for ever.

The LORD is on my side: I will not fear what man can do unto me.

It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.

It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.

All nations compassed me about; but in the name of the LORD will I destroy them.

They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched

* Delany's Life of David.

† Psalm cxviii.

as the fire of thorns: for in the name of the LORD I will destroy them.

Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall; but the LORD helped me.

The LORD is my strength and song, and is become my salvation.

The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.

The right hand of the LORD is exalted: the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.

Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the LORD.

This is the gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter.

I will praise thee: for Thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation.

The stone which the builders refused, is become the head-stone of the corner.

This is the LORD's doing, it is marvellous in our eyes.

This is the day which the LORD hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it.

Save now, I beseech Thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech Thee, send now prosperity.

Thou art my GOD, and I will praise Thee; thou art my GOD, I will exalt thee.

O give thanks unto the LORD, for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever.

SECTION VIII.

**DAVID FETCHETH THE ARK FROM KIRJATH-JEARIM
WITH GREAT REJOICINGS — UZZAH STRUCK DEAD
FOR TOUCHING IT—IT IS CARRIED TO THE HOUSE
OF OBED-EDOM.**

From 1 Chron. Chap. xiii.

**AND David consulted with the captains of thousands
and hundreds, and with every leader.**

And

And David said unto all the congregation of Israel, If it seem good unto you, and that it be of the LORD our God, let us send abroad unto our brethren every where that are left in all the land of Israel, and with them also to the priests and Levites which are in their cities and suburbs, that they may gather themselves unto us.

And let us bring again the ark of our God to us: for we enquired not at it in the days of Saul.

And all the congregation said, that they would do so :
for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people.

So David gathered all Israel together, from Shihor of Egypt even unto the entering of Hemath, to bring the ark of God from Kirjath-jearim.

And David went up, and all Israel to Baalah, that is to Kirjath-jearim, which belongeth to Judah, to bring up thence the ark of God the LORD; that dwelleth between the cherubims, whose name is called on it.

And they carried the ark of God in a new cart out of the house of Abinadab. And Uzzah and Ahio drave the cart.

And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets.

And when they came unto the threshing floor of Chidon, Uzzah put forth his hand to hold the ark: for the oxen stumbled.

And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah, and he smote him, because he put forth his hand to the ark: and there he died before God.

And David was displeased because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah, wherefore that place is called Perez-uzzah to this day.

And David was afraid of God that day, saying, How shall I bring the ark of God home to me?

So David brought not the ark home to himself to the city of David, but carried it aside to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite.

And the ark of God remained with the family of Obed-edom in his house three months. And the LORD blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that he had.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is likely that David recovered from the Philistines all that they had gained at the battle of Gilboa, and drove them out of the cities they had seized at the death of Saul*; and being now fixed at Jerusalem, he was resolved to do every thing in his power to increase its safety and magnificence.

It is related in a former part of this history, with what solemnity the Ark had been deposited in the Tabernacle by Moses, and that the *glorious cloud*, which appeared as a *manifestation of the DIVINE PRESENCE*, rested on the *MERCY-SEAT above the cherubims*. A veil was placed before the Ark, and Aaron and his sons ministered there, and offered incense on the golden altar; and the people assembled in the court of the tabernacle to offer their burnt-offerings, to join in celebrating the praises of the LORD, and to make supplications to him, and perform their vows; which was called *appearing before the LORD*. Wherever the Ark was deposited, to that place the tribes were ordered to repair three times a year to keep the passover, &c. therefore the *public worship of God* could not have been properly performed at Jerusalem, neither could that city have been the *metro-*

* Chandler's Life of David.

polis of the Lord's peculiar kingdom, without the Ark, which made David very desirous to bring it thither.

Hitherto the Ark had had no settled habitation; for many years it had been carried about from place to place; and in the time of Eli, God, to punish the Israelites for their impiety, had permitted it to fall into the hands of the Philistines; and when the calamities the Philistines suffered for detaining it obliged them to send it back into the land of Israel, it was left in the house of Abinadab, and here it had remained about forty-six years, till David's establishment on the throne; excepting on some particular occasions, when it was carried into the field of battle.

David's proposal to bring the ark to Jerusalem met with the joyful concurrence of his people, and was put immediately in execution. The * procession must have been uncommonly grand, as it consisted of all the nobility, the priests and Levites, and the officers of the army, with the ensigns and ornaments of their different orders, led on by their sovereign, and followed by an innumerable multitude of people belonging to the different tribes of Israel. During the procession, David and all those who were skilful in music, expressed their joy by playing on various instruments; but their transports were soon interrupted by a dreadful visitation on Uzzah, one of the sons of Abinadab, who drove the cart. It is said, "THAT GOD smote him for his error." It was a great crime in Uzzah to be ignorant of any thing respecting the ARK; for the law of Moses expressly taught that no one but the *priests* should *touch* it; and therefore he should have fully instructed himself concerning the requisite ceremonies, before he presumed to attend it; especially on so solemn an occasion, when the king and

* Delany's Life of David.

people were assembled to do it honour: and as the Lord was about to restore his holy worship, it was necessary that the congregation should be taught to reverence His Divine ordinances. The religion of the Jews, as has been repeatedly observed, consisted partly of a variety of *ceremonials*, which were types and symbols of divine things, and the *pledges* of their COVENANT concerning the land of Canaan; if they omitted them they forfeited their privileges; and as the DIVINE BEING had sanctified the ARK in so visible a manner by a token of his immediate PRESENCE, it was certainly *sacred*, and ought to have been attended with the utmost reverence: nothing less than a judgment from heaven upon a profanation of it, could recover the people to a proper sense of the respect due to that sacred repository of the written law and commandments of God, the Tables of Testimony.

It is said *David was displeased*; but from the piety of his disposition, we may suppose, that he was only *disappointed and grieved*, that his holy purposes were interrupted, and fear took possession of his mind, lest he should, through ignorance, commit offence likewise.

It may seem strange, that David should not be fully acquainted with the law of Moses; but we must consider the times he lived in; the Ark had been greatly neglected for many years; religion was but little attended to in the days of Saul, for the bad example of the sovereign and his court is too apt to influence a nation: all the priests who had ever seen the Ark were dead excepting one young man, who had never seen it removed; neither were there any Levites alive, who had been present at that solemnity. David and his people had been constantly engaged in war; and though his mind was naturally inclined to piety, he had not had much opportunity of attending *public worship*, according to the original establishment.

The signal vengeance of God on Uzzah struck David

with the utmost consternation; and he would not venture to advance any farther with the ark at that time: Obed-edom, at whose house he left it, was a Levite, and a pious good man: he rejoiced to receive it, knowing it would prove a blessing to him and his family, as he well understood the nature of Uzzah's offence.

Though Christians cannot be guilty of the very crime for which Uzzah received such an exemplary punishment every one who *wilfully* neglects to make use of the means with which it pleased God to bless them, for learning their duty, is certainly liable to the Divine displeasure. Let us therefore study, with unremitting diligence, the HOLY SCRIPTURES, lest, for want of knowing them, we fall into *sin*, and be, like Uzzah, *cut off for our ERROR.*

SECTION VIII.

DAVID ORDERETH THE PRIESTS AND LEVITES TO CARRY THE ARK TO JERUSALEM—HE ATTENDETH IT WITH GREAT JOY.

From 1 Chron. Chap. xv, xvi. 2 Sam. Chap. v.

And David made him houses in the city of David, and prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched for it a tent.

Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the LORD chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him for ever.

And David gathered all Israel together to Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the LORD unto his place which he had prepared for it.

And David assembled the children of Aaron, and the Levites: in all eight hundred and sixty-two.

And

And David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites, for Uriel, Asaiah, and Joel, She-maiah, and Eliel and Aminadab,

And said unto them, Ye are the chief of the fathers of the Levites, sanctify yourselves both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for it.

For because ye did it not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order.

So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel.

And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders, as Moses commanded.

And David spake to the chief of the Levites, to appoint their brethren to be the singers with instruments of music, psalteries, and harps and cymbals sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy. And they did so.

So David and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD, out of the house of Obed-edom, with joy.

And it came to pass, when God helped the Levites that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, that they offered seven bullocks and seven rams.

And David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, and all the Levites that bare the ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah the master of the song, with the singers: David also had upon him an ephod of linen.

And it came to pass, as the ark of the covenant of the LORD came to the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul, looking out at a window, saw king David dancing and playing, and she despised him in her heart.

So they brought the ark of God, and set it in the

midst of the tent that David had pitched for it: and they offered-burnt sacrifices and peace-offerings before God.

And when David had made an end of offering the burnt-offerings and the peace-offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD.

And he dealt to every one of Israel, both man and woman, to every one a loaf of bread and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine.

And he appointed certain of the Levites to minister before the ark of the LORD, and to record, and to thank and praise the LORD God of Israel with psalteries, and with harps, with cymbals and with trumpets, continually before the ark of the covenant of God.

So he left there before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, Asaph and his brethren, to minister before the ark continually, as every day's work required.

And Zadok the priest and his brethren the priests, before the tabernacle of the LORD, in the high place that was at Gibeon.

And all the people departed every man to his house: and David returned to bless his household.

And Michal Saul's daughter came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel to-day, who appeared in the eyes of the maid-servants as one of the vain fellows.

And David said unto Michal, It was before the LORD which chose me before my father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel: therefore will I play before the LORD.

And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maid-servants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour.

ANNOTATIONS

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Whilst the ark remained at the house of Obed-edom, David fully instructed himself concerning the requisite ceremonials; the priests and Levites having also thoroughly considered the matter, the congregation of Israel was once more assembled, and the procession began with solemnity and decorum. The Levites were arrayed in robes of fine linen; and the king assuming the character of an humble attendant on the ARK of God, laid aside his royal garments, and attired himself in a long robe, like that worn by the Levites, over which he put an ephod as a mark of distinction.

Before the procession began from the house of Obed-edom, David offered up a devout prayer; and declared his firm belief in the promises of God, to him and his posterity, as follows*.

LORD, remember David, and all his afflictions.

How he swore unto the LORD, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob.

Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed;

I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the LORD, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.

Arise, O LORD, into Thy rest; Thou, and the ark of Thy strength.

Let Thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy.

For thy servant David's sake, turn not away the face of Thine anointed.

The LORD hath sworn in truth unto David, He will not

* Psalm cxxxii.

turn from it, Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.

If thy children will keep My covenant, and My testimony that I shall teach them; their children also shall sit upon thy throne for evermore.

For the LORD hath chosen Zion: He hath desired it for His habitation.

This is My rest for ever: here will I dwell, for I have desired it.

I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread.

I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.

There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.

His enemies will I clothe with shame: but upon himself shall his crown flourish.

The latter part of this Psalm bears evident marks of Divine inspiration. It is supposed, that the following Psalm was sung in divisions to solemn music*.

P A R T I.

Sung when the Priests lifted up the Ark†.

Let GOD arise, let His enemies be scattered: let them also that hate Him flee before Him.

As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of GOD.

But let the righteous be glad: let them rejoice before GOD, yea, let them exceedingly rejoice.

Sing unto GOD, sing praises to His name: extol Him that rideth upon the heavens by His name JAH, and rejoice before Him.

* Dr. Chandler's Life of David.

† Psalm lxxviii.

*A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows,
is GOD in His holy habitation.*

P A R T II.

Sung when the Ark was placed on the Shoulders of
the Levites.

*O GOD, when Thou wentest forth before Thy people ;
when Thou didst march through the wilderness ;*

*The earth shook, the heavens also drooped at the pre-
sence of GOD : even Sinah itself was moved at the pre-
sence of GOD, the GOD of Israel.*

*The LORD gave the word, great was the company of
those that published it.*

*Kings of armies did flee apace : and she that tarried at
home divided the spoil.*

*Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as
the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers
with yellow gold.*

The words in the first part, agree with those used by
Moses and the Israelites whenever they removed the
ark: those in the second, served to remind the people
of GOD's former mercies to the house of Jacob.

When the ark was in view of mount Sion, it is pro-
bable this was sung.

P A R T III.

*The chariots of GOD are twenty thousand, even thou-
sands of angels ; the LORD is among them as in Sinai, in
the holy place.*

*Blessed be the LORD, who daily loadeth us with bene-
fits, even the GOD of our salvation.*

*He that is our GOD is the GOD of salvation : and
unto GOD the LORD belong the issues from death.*

Sing unto GOD, ye kingdoms of the earth: O sing praises unto the LORD.

To Him that rideth upon the heaven of heavens, which were of old, lo, He doth send out His voice, and that a mighty voice.

Ascribe ye strength unto GOD: His excellency is over Israel, and His strength is in the clouds.

O GOD, Thou art terrible out of Thy holy places, the GOD of Israel is He that giveth strength and power unto His people; blessed be GOD.

It is supposed that the following Psalm was set to music on this occasion, and sung by way of dialogue by king and people; we may conjecture, that it began when they reached the foot of mount Sion*.

The earth† is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein.

For He hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.

When they arrived at the gates of Jerusalem, which may be considered as a type of Heaven, it is likely that the king and his choir sung as follows:

Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in.

And those within answered.

Who is the king of glory?

To which the first replied:

The LORD strong and mighty; the LORD mighty in battle.

And now let us suppose, that the procession proceeded to the gates of the court of the tabernacle, the instruments playing the same airs; and the king, princes, and damsels, moving to the measure (as was the custom

* Dr. Delany's Life of David.

† Psalm xxiv.

in those times); when they arrived at the gates of the tabernacle, they sung, and were answered as follows:

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in.

Who is the King of Glory?

The LORD of Hosts, He is the King of Glory.*

When they had deposited the ark in the tabernacle, it is likely the following was sung:

† *Give thanks unto the LORD, call upon His name, make known His deeds among the people.*

Sing unto him, sing psalms unto Him, talk ye of all His wondrous works.

Glory ye in His holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD.

Seek the LORD and His strength, seek His face continually.

Remember His marvellous works that he hath done, His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth; O ye seed of Israel His servant, ye children of Jacob His chosen ones.

He is the LORD our GOD; His judgments are in all the earth.

Be ye mindful always of His covenant; the word which He commanded to a thousand generations; even of the covenant which He made with Abraham, and of His oath unto Isaac;

And hath confirmed the same to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant.

Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance.

* The two learned authors, from whose works I have chiefly composed my comments on the Life of King David, differ in their application of psalms to this solemnity: that selected by each, appears to me well adapted to the occasion, therefore I have introduced them both; from the fear of omitting the psalm, which would excite the properest ideas in the minds of my readers.

† 1 Chron xvi. 8, &c.

*When ye were but few, even a few, and strangers in it :
And when they went from nation to nation, and from
one kingdom to another people ;*

*He suffered no man to do them wrong : yea, He re-
proved kings for their sakes,*

*Saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets
no harm.*

*Sing unto the LORD, all the earth ; shew forth from
day to day His salvation.*

*Declare his glory among the heathen ; His marvellous
works among all nations.*

*For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised : He
also is to be feared above all gods.*

*For all the gods of the people are idols : but the LORD
made the heavens.*

*Glory and honour are in his presence, strength and
gladness are in his place.*

*Give unto the LORD, ye kindreds of the people, give
unto the LORD glory and strength.*

*Give unto the LORD the glory due unto His name :
bring an offering and come before Him ; worship the
LORD in the beauty of holiness.*

*Fear before Him, all the earth : the world also shall
be stable, that it be not moved.*

*Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice : and
let men say among the nations, The LORD reigneth.*

*Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof : let the fields
rejoice, and all that is therein.*

*Then shall the trees of the wood sing out at the pre-
sence of the LORD, because He cometh to judge the earth.*

*O give thanks to the LORD, for He is good : for His
mercy endureth for ever.*

*And say ye, Save us, O GOD of our salvation, and
gather us together, and deliver us from the heathen, that
we may give thanks to Thy holy name, and glory in
Thy praise.*

Blessed

Blessed be the LORD GOD of Israel for ever and ever; and all the people said, Amen, and praised the LORD.

“It is supposed that the ark was carried to Jerusalem at the feast of tabernacles, at which time the Jews were obliged to live in booths and tents; and as their houses had flat roofs, there is reason to imagine they* built their bowers on the tops of them with ever-greens of various kinds; and that they also erected booths in ranges throughout the largest streets of the city. What a beautiful appearance must this have made, especially at night, when a number of lights glimmered through the branches; and how must the humane heart of David be delighted, when he considered all these bowers filled with people, happy in the consciousness of having discharged their duty towards God, and rejoicing in his returning favour; but above all, what satisfaction must arise in his mind from the reflection, that he was, under God, the cause of all this felicity! It† is likely that he made use of the following words in blessing his people‡.”

GOD be merciful unto us, and bless us: and cause His face to shine upon us.

That thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations.

Let the people praise Thee, O GOD; let all the people praise Thee.

O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for Thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth.

Let the people praise Thee, O GOD; let all the people praise Thee.

* Nehemiah, viii. 15, 16.

† See Delany's Life of David.

‡ Psalm lxxvii.

Then

Then shall the earth yield her increase; and GOD, even our own GOD, shall bless us.

GOD shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.

When David had blessed the people, and they were gone to join their families in their respective tents, he repaired to his house to rejoice with his household; but Michal who was offended with David for his great humility in laying aside his robes of royalty, and playing on his harp before the ark, reproached him, for thus levelling himself with his subjects, thinking that he had exposed himself to their scorn and contempt: her reproaches affected him not; for he was conscious that he had acted properly, and was certain, that his behaviour was not only approved of GOD, but would procure him esteem and honour rather than derision among men; for dancing was in these days frequently practised as a religious ceremony, on public solemnities.

‘Miriam the prophetess took a timbrel, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances, when the Israelites were delivered from Egyptian bondage;’ so also did Jephthah’s daughter: and other instances might be produced from sacred history. From whence we may conclude, that David did not act with impropriety in this particular; and surely we cannot join with Michal, in condemning him for playing on his harp on so *joyful* an occasion; therefore, we must own that she exposed *herself* most to contempt and derision, by laying aside the noblest ornaments of a royal matron, piety and humility towards GOD.

Though David, when seated on the throne of Israel, was at the height of worldly power and grandeur, he could not rest till he had established the public worship of GOD in his kingdom, and for this purpose he was at incredible pains and expence. David had well considered the subject, and was convinced, that the practice
of

of religious duties was absolutely necessary for the welfare of the state, as well as for the happiness of its individuals. The king's example had proper influence on his subjects: the sabbaths of the LORD were regularly kept, and all the holy ordinances observed with becoming reverence: the LORD *caused the light of His countenance to shine on them*, and they were prosperous and honourable.

We may understand, from the psalms here introduced, that David's ideas of the LORD God were such, as Moses endeavoured to excite in the minds of the Israelites.

SECTION IX.

NATHAN FIRST APPROVETH DAVID'S PURPOSE TO BUILD AN HOUSE FOR THE ARK—AFTERWARDS BY GOD'S COMMAND FORBIDDETH HIM—DAVID'S PRAYER AND THANKSGIVING.

From 2 Sam. Chap. vii, viii.

AND it came to pass when the king sat in his house, and the LORD had given him rest round about from all his enemies; that the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains.

And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in thine heart: for the LORD is with thee.

And it came to pass that night, that the word of the LORD came unto Nathan, saying, Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the LORD, Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in? whereas I have not dwelt in any house, since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle.

In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel, spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me an house of cedar?

Now therefore, so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheep-cote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel.

And I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth.

(Moreover, I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and I will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more as beforetime, and as since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies) Also the LORD telleth thee, that he will make thee an house.

And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.

He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever.

I will be his father, and he shall be my son: if he commit iniquity I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the stripes of the children of men: but my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee.

And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.

According

According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.

Then went David in, and sat down before the LORD, and he said, Who am I, O LORD GOD? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? and this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O LORD GOD; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come; and is this the manner of men, O LORD GOD? and what can David say more unto thee? for thou LORD GOD knowest thy servant.

For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know them.

Wherefore thou art great, O LORD GOD: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God besides thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears.

And what one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things, and terrible, for thy land before thy people which thou redeemest to thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods? for thou hast confirmed to thyself thy people Israel to be a people unto thee for ever: and thou, LORD, art become their God.

And now, O LORD GOD, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and do as thou hast said.

And let thy name be magnified for ever, saying, The LORD of hosts is the God over Israel: and let the house of thy servant David be established before thee.

For thou, O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house: therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee.

And

And now, O LORD GOD, thou art that GOD, and thy words be true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant.

Therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee: for thou, O LORD GOD, hast spoken it, and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

David was now at rest from his enemies, and had established the public worship at JERUSALEM; but he wished to give the service of GOD all the dignity due to it, to diffuse the GLORY of the LORD throughout the ends of the earth, that the light of true religion should rise from JERUSALEM, *like the sun from his tabernacle; that its going forth should be from the uttermost parts of the heavens, and its circuit unto the ends of it, and that nothing should be hid from the light and influence of it.*

David had a deep sense of the deficiency of his *best endeavours*, and an ardent desire to *do more*; he therefore formed a scheme for building a magnificent temple, Nathan the prophet, his friend with whom he consulted, thinking it a laudable design, encouraged him to put it in execution; but as at this time Nathan spake only according to the dictates of his own reason, he advised wrong; for the LORD revealed to him by the Holy Spirit, that he had appointed other business for David; and to soften the refusal, the LORD graciously promised that David's son should build the temple, and that he would establish his kingdom *for ever*. David, overcome with gratitude and astonishment, hasted to the Tabernacle, to pour out his acknowledgments to his Divine Benefactor; his words as recorded in this Section were expressive of the utmost piety, modesty, and humility.

SECTION

SECTION X.

DAVID SUBDUETH THE PHILISTINES, THE MOABITES,
AND OTHER ENEMIES OF ISRAEL.

DAVID understanding, from Nathan's answer, that he was not to build a temple unto the LORD, but that he was appointed to subdue the enemies of Israel, and establish his people in peace and security; reflected, that as they were not in full possession of the promised land, it was his peculiar business to drive out the idolaters, and settle the tribes of Israel in their stead. He therefore began with the Philistines, having made no treaty with them; and it is likely that even Achish, who had behaved in so friendly a manner when David fled to him for succour, had joined in committing hostilities against him as king of Israel; besides, it was utterly inconsistent with David's present situation, to shew partial favour towards Achish, from private motives.

It is related that David subdued the Philistines, and took from them *Metheg Ammah*, by which is meant the city of Gath and the territories belonging to it.

The Moabites had been so effectually subdued by Ehud, that we read no more of them in sacred history till the days of Saul, who warred against them with success. The king of Moab behaved with great hospitality to David's parents; however, when he came to the crown, they entered into a confederacy against him with the neighbouring nations, and renewed their hostilities; so David smote them also. The LORD had expressly commanded, that the Israelites should not attack the Edomites, Moabites, and Amorites, without *provocation*; for this reason, David was particularly careful to pre-serve

serve the lives of as many of them as he could. Having conquered the whole country, David took an exact survey of every part of it, *casting them to the ground*; that is, *laying level their strong holds and fortified places*, excepting such as he thought proper to garrison with his troops; then he marked out two tracks of the country, one consisting of those Moabites who had been most active in the war against him; these he condemned to death, and the inhabitants of the other he saved alive, on condition of their paying him tribute.

David next went to extend his dominions as far as the grant given by God to Abraham, in these words, *Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates*; but he met with great opposition from Hadadezer, the son of Rehob, who was at that time king of Zobah, in the land of Syria.

The Syrians* were descended partly from Aram, the youngest son of Shem, and partly from Hamathi, one of the eleven sons of Canaan. Syria, which was of great extent, was divided into many petty kingdoms, of which Zobah was one. Rehob is supposed to have been the first king of it, and to have laid the foundation of his son's grandeur. Hadadezer was a great and ambitious prince, and seems to have aspired at the universal monarchy of Syria; but his opposition to David was attended with such losses, that he was under the necessity of calling in the aid of the people of Damascus (another part of Syria), which place was then without a king; but they soon after received for their sovereign, Rezon†, one of Hadadezer's subjects, who revolted from him.

David is said to have taken from Hadadezer, 1000 chariots and 720,000 footmen; and when the Syrian of

* See the History of the Syrians in the Universal History.

† See 1 Kings xi, 23.

Damascus came to their succour, David's army slew of them 22,000 men, and took a vast number of golden shields. .

We may form an high idea of the riches of the Syrians, from the number of chariots and horses which even those kings who reigned over a very small part of it possessed; and from the golden shields which David took from their soldiers. David hamstringed the horses, and burned the chariots in the fire, agreeably to the command of the LORD formerly given to prevent his people from placing dependance on their own power, and that they might trust in him alone.

We read that Joab smote every male in Edom, and afterwards put garrisons in that country; from which we may conclude that the Edomites also had joined the former conspiracy, *to cut off Israel from being a nation, that the name of Israel might no longer remain in remembrance.* And from the account of Joab's severity towards them, there is reason to suppose, that as the Edomites had abused the mercy which God had commanded to be shewed towards them, David was authorized to put them to the sword. We must not, however, imagine, that Joab destroyed *all* the inhabitants in the whole country of Edom; though we are told, *that he cut off all the males*; for this expression may only extend to those who were in arms against him, and shews that he spared the women and children.

From the time of Moses, when, as we read in a former part of this history, the Edomites refused Israel a passage through their land, sacred history is silent about them, except in respect to their joining the confederacy above mentioned; but it appears, that they had employed themselves in extending their dominions, and had applied themselves to trade and navigation, particularly in the
Arabian

Arabian gulf. They dealt in very rich commodities: pure gold, gold of Ophir, the topaz of Ethiopia, corals, pearls, &c. and became a very considerable kingdom; but they now began to feel the effects of Isaac's prophecy, that *the elder should serve the younger*; for those that were not destroyed, were either brought into subjection by Joab, or fled with their young king into Egypt.

Though David was engaged in wars abroad, he did not neglect the administration of justice at home; all his subjects were safe under his protection, and shared the fruits of his good government. He made choice of able ministers to discharge the great offices of the state. JOAB was *commander in chief of the forces*; he was a valiant man; but there is reason to suppose, David would willingly have preferred another to this post, on account of Joab's having murdered Amasa; but that he could not remove him without raising commotions in the kingdom, as Joab had great power and influence.

JEHIEL was *tutor and governor of the king's younger sons*. JEHOSHAPHAT, the son of Ahilud, was *recorder*, or a remembrancer or writer of chronicles. JONATHAN and SERAIAH were the *scribes*, or *principal secretaries of state*. The brave BENAIAH, who had performed noble exploits, was the captain of the life-guards, who were called Cherethites and Pelethites.

Cherethites was another name for *Philistines*; but we cannot suppose that David preferred those who had been the inveterate enemies of his country (even if they were now become *proselytes*) to his own subjects, the most probable conjecture therefore is, that the *Cherethites* were those troops who had resorted to him in his distress, gone along with him into Philistia, and adhered to him in his calamities.

The *Pelethites* are supposed to have been those who resorted

sorted to him at Ziklag, whilst he was still under the protection of Achish, who might be denominated *Pelethites*, from the name of their leader* *Pelet*, the son of Azmaveth.

ZADOK, the son of Ahitub, and ABIMELECH, the son of Abiathar, were the priests; David's eldest sons were chief rulers; AHITHOPHEL was the king's *counsellor*; and HUSHAI, the Archite, was the king's companion.

There were a number of other officers of state in different departments.

SECTION XI.

DAVID SENDETH FOR MEPHIBOSHETH, JONATHAN'S SON.

From 2 Samuel Chap. viii, ix.

AND David reigned over all Israel, and David executed judgment and justice unto all his people.

And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake? And there was of the house of Saul, a servant whose name was Ziba; and when they had called him unto David, the king said unto him, Art thou Ziba? And he said, Thy servant is he.

And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may shew the kindness of God unto him? and Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son which is lame on his feet.

And the king said unto him, Where is he? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he is in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lo-debar.

Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lo-debar.

* 1 Chron. xii. 13.

Now when Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence. And David said Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant.

And David said unto him, Fear not; for I will surely shew thee kindness, for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father, and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually.

And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am? Then the king called to Ziba Saul's servant and said unto him, I have given unto thy master's son all that pertained to Saul, and to all his house.

Thou therefore and thy sons, and thy servants, shall till the land for him, and thou shalt bring in the fruits, that thy master's son's family may have food to eat: but Mephibosheth thy master's son shall eat bread alway at my table. Now Ziba had fifteen sons, and twenty servants.

Then said Ziba unto the king, According to all that my lord the king hath commanded his servant, so shall thy servant do. As for Mephibosheth, said the king, he shall eat at my table, as one of the king's sons.

And Mephibosheth had a young son whose name was Micha: and all that dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants unto Mephibosheth.

So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem: for he did eat continually at the king's table: and was lame on both his feet.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Whenever David enjoyed an interval of peace, he studied to improve it to some good purpose; his gratitude to God had lately been shewn in bringing back the Ark, and the pious design of building a temple for public worship,

ship: religion was his first care, and the good of his subjects was the next.

No doubt he often recollected, with painful regret and tender sorrow, his dear friend Jonathan; but whilst his kingdom was in an unsettled state, he could not with propriety and safety introduce into his family one of Saul's race; besides, it is probable, David supposed Mephibosheth was dead (as his nurse concealed him), and that he thought there were none of Jonathan's posterity alive; but as his covenant with his departed friend remained firmly impressed on his memory he resolved, (as soon as he had regulated the affairs of the state) to shew kindness to any one of Saul's family who might be living for Jonathan's sake; and when he found on enquiry that there was still a son of his left, his heart panted with impatience to shew him kindness, to succour and protect him.

How kindly did David remove the fears of Mephibosheth, and provide for the support of his household, by giving him the paternal inheritance of Saul, and receiving him into his own family.

Mephibosheth was now raised from a state of obscurity and apprehension, to plenty, ease, and magnificence; he had an ample fortune, and was treated as one of the royal family; besides all this, he enjoyed the confidence of the king, who without doubt took every opportunity of engaging his gratitude by acts of generosity and tenderness. Thus we find, that David was faithful in the performance of his promises, and did not suffer prosperity and success to obliterate the remembrance of those benefits which had been conferred on him in the time of his distress. How truly exemplary was his conduct in this instance!

SECTION XII.

DAVID'S AMBASSADORS ABUSED BY THE AMMONITES.

A WAR ENSUES*.

WHEN David had settled the affairs of his kingdom, and testified his grateful respect for the memory of his dear friend Jonathan, he resolved to discharge another debt of gratitude by sending a friendly embassy to Hanun, the son of Nahash, king of the Ammonites, to condole with him on the death of his father, who had on some occasion shewed kindness to David, probably when he was persecuted by Saul.

Instead of receiving this compliment as it was intended, Hanun was persuaded by the princes of Ammon to regard it as an artifice of David's to inform himself of the strength of the city, that he might turn his arms against it; and as a mark of resentment for this supposed offence, Hanun caused David's ambassadors to be seized, and directed that they should have half their beards shaved off, and their garments cut short, and in this condition be sent back to their own country.

This was a very great indignity, because long beards and long garments were marks of honour and distinction; and cutting off the beard was a matter of the highest reproach at that time; for it was inflicted in some places as a punishment for heinous offences, and was a particular insult to the Jews, as their religion prohibited their cutting off any part of their beards.

David, though he must naturally resent this contemptuous and injurious treatment of his ambassadors, did not make any preparations for war, till the Ammonites, who

* 2 Sam. x.

expected to feel the effects of his resentment, had hired confederates and taken the field. It was a fixed principle with David, never to indulge his *own* revenge against any people; we may therefore conclude, that he referred himself to God, and had permission to send forth his army with Joab to repel the invasion.

Joab inadvertently exposed himself and his army to great danger, by not gaining proper information in respect to the situation of the enemy; but with a happy presence of mind, and proper confidence in God, he animated his soldiers with a noble speech, and they drove their enemies before them. The sentiments Joab expressed were such as every commander, engaged in a proper cause, should endeavour to inspire into his troops when preparing for battle—To be of good courage; to acquit themselves like men; and to leave the event of the battle to the LORD OF HOSTS.

Whether the season of the year was too far advanced to keep the field, or for what reason Joab returned to Jerusalem, we are not told; but it seems, the Syrians expected another attack, and prepared accordingly; when David learnt this, he collected his troops, and went against them in person; a battle ensued, in which was the greatest slaughter that is recorded in any of David's wars. It is said that David slew the men of seven hundred chariots of the Syrians, who were confederate with the Ammonites, and forty thousand horsemen.

The gaining of this battle effectually finished the Syrian war, and established David's dominions on that side, to the utmost extent of God's promise to Abraham.

“ Now* was David advanced to the highest pitch of power and grandeur; he had been successful in eight several wars, all righteously begun; and what is very

* Delany's Life of King David.

extraordinary, had fought no battle which he did not win, and assaulted no city which he did not take—but *the LORD was with him.*

SECTION XIII.

DAVID CAUSETH URIAH TO BE SLAIN IN BATTLE—
AND TAKETH BATHSHEBA TO BE HIS WIFE.

From 2 Samuel, Chap. xi, xii.

AND it came to pass, that after the year was expired at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah: but David tarried still at Jerusalem.

And it came to pass, that as David walked on the roof of his house, that he beheld a woman, and she was beautiful.

And David sent and enquired after her, and one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite. And David sent messengers and took her, but the woman returned to her husband's house.

And it came to pass that David wrote a letter to Joab saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle; and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die.

And it came to pass when Joab observed the city, that he assigned Uriah unto a place where he knew that valiant men were.

And the men of the city went out, and fought with Joab: and there fell some of the people of the servants of David, and Uriah the Hittite died also.

Then Joab sent, and told David all the things concerning the war.

And charged the messenger, saying, When thou hast
made

made an end of telling the matters of the war unto the king, and if so be that the king's wrath arise, and he say unto thee, Wherefore approached ye so nigh unto the city when ye did fight? knew ye not that they would shoot from the wall?

Who smote Abimelech the son of Jerub-besheth? did not a woman cast a piece of a mill-stone upon him from the wall, that he died in Thebez? why went ye nigh the wall? then say thou, Thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.

So the messenger went, and came and shewed David all that Joab had sent him for.

And the messenger said unto David, Surely the men prevailed against us, and came out unto us into the field, and we were upon them even unto the entering of the gate.

And the shooters shot from off the wall upon thy servants, and some of the king's servants be dead, and thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.

Then David said unto the messenger, Thus shalt thou say unto Joab, Let not this thing displease thee: for the sword devoureth one as well as another: make thy battle more strong against the city, and overthrow it; and encourage thou him.

And when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband.

And when the mourning was past, David sent, and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son; but the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.

And the LORD sent Nathan unto David: and he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich and the other poor.

The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds;

but the poor man had nothing save one little ewe-lamb which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.

And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flocks, and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him, but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him.

And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing, shall surely die.

And he shall restore the lamb four-fold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.

And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man.

Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul: and I gave thee thy master's house, and I gave thee the house of Israel, and of Judah: and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things.

Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.

Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.

Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil unto thee out of thine house, for thou didst it secretly, but I will do this thing before Israel, and before the sun.

And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the

the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, the LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.

Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is shocking to read, that David, who was so well acquainted with his duty, should commit such enormous crimes. The sin of taking another man's wife, which is called adultery, was forbidden under the Jewish law, on pain of death; yet David was not only guilty of it, but added treachery and murder to it! It is needless to enlarge on the nature of his offences, for our own reason tells us that they were very great. Nothing can be said in excuse for David; and it is to be feared, that prosperity had made him less attentive to the performance of his religious exercises, or they would have kept his mind from desiring what God's law forbade him to covet: as his crime was of a most heinous nature, the LORD sent Nathan to bring him to public confession. Nathan executed his commission with so much judgment and address, that the king, without knowing it, pronounced sentence on himself. Did *he* deserve to die who had taken his neighbour's lamb? How much more *he* who had taken his neighbour's wife, and caused him to be slain; who had abused God's bounty, and despised the commandment of the LORD.

David did not offer to extenuate his guilt, but, stung with shame, and oppressed with a dread of the Divine vengeance, so justly due, he acknowledged his sin; and the LORD, knowing that his penitence was sincere, to save him from despair, permitted Nathan to assure him, that he would *spare his life*, and *save him from eternal*

death; but the honour of God required that some exemplary punishment should fall on such a sinner; lest blasphemous men should say, *the LORD was partial in his dealings, and a respecter of persons*: and we shall find, that all the evils, which Nathan foretold, fell upon David afterwards.

As soon as the king found that his guilt was known to the world, he resolved to do all in his power to wipe off the reproach he had brought on that holy religion, which he had taken such pains to propagate; and make all possible reparation for his offence, both to God and man. Could the blood of thousands of burnt sacrifices have washed away the stain of guilt from his polluted mind, gladly would he have offered them; but for such crimes the only sacrifice that could be acceptable to the LORD was, repentance and public humiliation; David therefore resolved to make *a public confession before his people, and for this purpose he composed the following psalm, commanding it to be sung in the tabernacle, in the presence of the congregation, himself attending, and prostrate before the throne of mercy.†

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving kindness, according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.

Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight: that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest.

Behold, I was shapen in iniquity: and in sin did my mother conceive me.

* Delany's Life of David.

† Psalm li.

Behold,

Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Make me to hear joy and gladness: that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice.

Hide Thy face from my sins: and blot out all mine iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O GOD; and renew a right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from Thy presence: and take not Thy holy Spirit from me.

Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free spirit.

Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee.

Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O GOD, Thou GOD of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteousness.

O LORD, open Thou my lips, and my mouth shall shew forth Thy praise.

For Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it: Thou delightest not in burnt-offering.

The sacrifices of GOD are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O GOD, Thou wilt not despise.

Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion: build Thou the walls of Jerusalem.

Then shalt Thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt-offering, and whole burnt-offering; then shall they offer bullocks upon Thine altar.

Let us suppose that we behold the greatest monarch upon earth thus humbled for his sins before GOD, confessing his crime with contrition and confusion of face,

calling out for mercy, and imploring pardon in the presence of his meanest subjects; and we cannot but feel the greatest abhorrence of guilt, which alone could reduce him to such a situation. Besides the displeasure of God, and the reproach he had brought on religion, David was scorned by his enemies, and insulted by his inferiors: surely no one will be encouraged to imitate him in his crimes; for supposing that they could even be certain of practising the same degree of penitence, what pleasure on earth can be worth so dear a purchase? But we shall be able to comprehend his accumulated distress better from his own words, than from any other description of it.

** I am weary of my crying, my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my GOD.*

O GOD, Thou knowest my foolishness: and my sins are not hid from Thee.

Let not them that wait on Thee, O LORD GOD of hosts, be ashamed for my sake: let not those that seek Thee, be confounded for my sake, O GOD of Israel.

Because for Thy sake I have borne reproach: shame hath covered my face.

I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children.

For the zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up: and the reproaches of them that reproached Thee, are fallen upon me.

When I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach.

I made sackcloth also my garment: and I became a proverb to them.

They that sit in the gate, speak against me: and I was the song of the drunkards.

But as for me, my prayer is unto Thee, O LORD, in an

** Psalm lxi.*

acceptable

acceptable time: O GOD, in the multitude of Thy mercy hear me, in the truth of Thy salvation.

Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink: let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters.

Let not the water-flood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me.

Hear me, O LORD, for thy loving kindness is good: turn unto me according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies.

And hide not Thy face from Thy servant, for I am in trouble: hear me speedily.

Draw nigh unto my soul, and redeem it: deliver me because of mine enemies.

Thou hast known my reproach and my shame, and my dishonour: mine adversaries are all before thee.

Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.

SECTION XIV.

DAVID'S CHILD IS STRUCK WITH SICKNESS.
HIS SORROW ON THAT OCCASION, AND BEHAVIOUR
WHEN HE DIETH.

From 2 Samuel, Chap. xii.

AND Nathan departed unto his house: and the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick.

David therefore besought GOD for the child, and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth.

And the elders of his house arose, and went to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them.

And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died: and the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice: how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead?

But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead.

Then David arose from the earth, and washed and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped: then he came to his own house, and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat.

Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child while it was alive, but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread.

And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? but now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.

And David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and she bare a son, and called his name Solomon; and the LORD loved him.

And he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet; and he called his name Jedidiah, because of the LORD.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It was very natural for David, in his peculiar situation, to feel the most pungent sorrow on account of the sickness of his child, though it was so very young; for he suffered

on

on this occasion, as a sinner, as well as a parent, but when it was dead, we find *he ceased to grieve*, for he knew it was his duty to submit with patience and resignation to the Divine will; and to reconcile himself to the death of the child, since its sufferings were at an end, and it was no longer an object of tender commiseration. In this instance David set an excellent example to all parents, who meet with a similar affliction; but what superior consolation may Christians derive from the hope which the Gospel affords, that their beloved infants, when taken from them, are immediately received by their merciful Saviour, and admitted to a superlative degree of happiness in the regions of bliss! If then parents wish to meet again those whom they have resigned with such heart-rending pangs, let them have a more particular regard to regulate their lives by the rules of the Gospel, imitating little children in simplicity, humility, and purity of heart, that they may hereafter with them always behold the face of their Father which is in heaven*.

How gracious was the LORD in sending Nathan with a message of consolation, from which David derived hopes that his penitence was acceptable, and his prayer heard. He now resolved to bear all the temporal evils that had been threatened, with patience and resignation; since God had not *cast him out from his presence, nor taken his Holy Spirit from him*†.” In this particular, his behaviour affords another exemplary lesson to Christians.

* Matt. xviii,

†As David's crime in respect to Uriah is a great subject of derision to SCOFFERS, I beg leave to refer my readers to his Life, written by Dr. Chandler and Dr. Delany, for a satisfactory discussion of the subjects, as the nature of my plan will not admit of my producing the arguments which are given by them in extenuation of his guilt.

SECTION

SECTION XV.

DAVID SUBDUES THE AMMONITES*.

THE Israelites continued to carry on the war with the Ammonites; probably they had been intimidated by the death of Uriah and his brave followers, and had not proceeded with so much vigour as before, and the enemy had made a more resolute resistance: at length, however, Joab made a breach in that part of the city where the reservoirs of water were, which reduced the Ammonites to the necessity of submitting; Joab then exhorted king David to come and put a finishing hand to the siege himself.

This was an expedition which came very seasonably to remove David's melancholy, to relieve his distress, and to blot out from the minds of his subjects the memory of his guilt in relation to Uriah, and also to revive his glory in arms. Rabbah was a royal and populous city, the metropolis of Arabia Felix, watered and in some measure surrounded, by the river Jabbok. It had its name from its grandeur, and was now in the height of its glory; and we may suppose, that the taking of it brought a great accession of glory to David as we are told it did of wealth.

It is said that the *weight of the king of Rabbah's crown, which David took from his head, was a talent of gold*†. But it was most likely the *value* of it with the precious stones instead of the *weight*, a talent of gold amounting to about 5000*l*.

It appears that the king of Rabbah was deposed, and David crowned in his stead; this king was Hanun, who

* 2 Sam. xii.

† Essay for a New Translation.

had treated David's ambassadors with so much indignity and it is imagined that David made *Shobi*, another son of Nahash, his viceroy at Rabbah; for in a subsequent part of this history it is said, that Shobi was in friendship with David, and shewed him great kindness.

David has been greatly censured for his treatment of his prisoners in this defeat. It is said, that he brought them forth, and put them under saws, and under harrows of iron; and that he made them pass through the brick-kilns. It is certainly dreadful to read of such tortures; but if they were actually inflicted, it could only have been by way of retaliation. The Israelites were raised up on purpose to be a scourge upon every vice and enormity in the idolatrous nations; and it was an invariable and fixed point of duty, to retort upon those sinners every cruelty they had committed. But there is another way of explaining this text, which is, I think, more satisfactory; a learned *author assures us, that it, may be translated, *he brought forth the inhabitants of it, and put them to the saw, to iron mines, and to iron axes; and transported them to the brick-kilns*: that is, he reduced them to slavery, and put them to the most servile employments; some to one kind of labour, some to another, by which means he brought them into entire subjection. It is certain that David did not destroy all the Ammonites; because we read, that in the reigns of future kings of Israel, they were very numerous.

After this memorable victory, David, with his whole army, returned to Jerusalem.

* Chandler's Life of David.

SECTION XVI.

ABSALOM KILLETH HIS BROTHER AMNON.

From 2 Sam. Chap. xiii, xiv.

AND Absalom David's son hated his brother Amnon because he had done evil to his sister Tamar.

And it came to pass, that Absalom had sheep-shearers in Baal-hazor, which is beside Ephraim: and Absalom invited all the king's sons.

And Absalom came to the king, and said, Behold now thy servant hath sheep-shearers, let the king, I beseech thee, and his servants, go with thy servant.

And the king said to Absalom, Nay, my son, let us not all now go, lest we be chargeable unto thee. And he pressed him: howbeit he would not go, but blessed him.

Then said Absalom, If not, I pray thee, let my brother Amnon go with us. And the king said unto him, Why should he go with thee? but Absalom pressed him, that he let Amnon and all the king's sons go with him.

Now Absalom had commanded his servants, saying, Mark ye now when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say unto you, Smite Amnon, then kill him, fear not; have I not commanded you? be courageous, and be valiant.

And the servants of Absalom did unto Amnon as Absalom had commanded: then all the king's sons arose, and every man gat him up upon his mule, and fled.

And it came to pass while they were in the way, that tidings came to David, saying, Absalom hath slain all the king's sons, and there is not one of them left.

Then

Then the king arose and tare his garments, and lay on the earth; and all his servants stood by with their clothes rent.

And Jonadab the son of Shimeah, David's brother, answered and said, let not my lord suppose that they have slain all the young men the king's sons; for Amnon only is dead: for by the appointment of Absalom hath this been determined.

Now therefore let not my lord the king take the thing to his heart, to think that all the king's sons are dead: for Amnon only is dead.

But Absalom fled. And the young man that kept the watch, lift up his eyes, and looked, and behold, there came much people by the way of the hill-side behind him.

And Jonadab said unto the king, Behold, the king's sons come: as thy servant said so it is.

And it came to pass as soon as he had made an end of speaking, that behold, the king's sons came, and lift up their voice and wept: and the king also, and all his servants, wept very sore.

But Absalom fled and went to Talmai, the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur; and David mourned for his son every day.

So Absalom fled, and went to Geshur, and was there three years.

And the soul of king David longed to go forth unto Absalom: for he was comforted concerning Amnon, seeing he was dead.

Now Joab the son of Zeruah perceived that the king's heart was toward Absalom.

And he entreated the king. And the king said unto Joab, Go and bring the young man Absalom again.

And Joab fell to the ground on his face, and bowed himself,

himself, and thanked the king: and Joab said, To-day thy servant knoweth that I have found grace in thy sight, my lord, O king, in that the king hath fulfilled the request of his servant.

So Joab arose and went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem.

And the king said, Let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face. So Absalom returned to his own house, and saw not the king's face.

But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him.

And when he polled his head, (for it was at every year's end that he polled it: because the hair was heavy on him, therefore he polled it:) he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels, after the king's weight.

And unto Absalom there were born three sons, and one daughter, whose name was Tamar: she was a woman of a fair countenance.

So Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, and saw not the king's face.

Therefore Absalom sent for Joab, to have sent him to the king; but he would not come to him; and when he sent again the second time, he would not come.

Therefore he said unto his servants, See, Joab's field is near mine, and he hath barley there; go, and set it on fire. And Absalom's servants set the field on fire.

Then Joab arose and came to Absalom unto his house, and said unto him, Wherefore have thy servants set my field on fire.

And Absalom answered Joab, Behold, I sent unto thee, saying, Come hither that I may send thee to the king, to say, Wherefore am I come from Geshur? it had been good

good for me to have been there still; now therefore let me see the king's face; and if there be any iniquity in me, let him kill me.

So Joab came to the king, and told him. And when he had called for Absalom, he came to the king, and bowed himself on his face, to the ground before the king. And the king kissed Absalom.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The prophecy of Nathan now began to be fulfilled upon David before his eyes: the sword was brought into his house, and not likely to depart from it. The sacred historian most pathetically describes David's distress on this afflicting occasion, by which he was deprived of two of his sons; for one was killed by the unnatural and barbarous command of his brother, and the murderer was obliged to flee away, in order to secure himself from public justice.

It appears from Absalom's subsequent conduct, that he was actuated to the cruel deed, partly by resentment, and partly by ambition, for he aspired to the crown; and when Amnon was removed, he was the eldest son; it was supposed that Chileab was dead, as no mention is made of him.

Absalom was the son of Maachah, daughter of Talmi, king of Geshur. How it came to pass that David made an alliance with a foreign princess, we are not informed; but it is supposed, that she was a proselyte to the Jewish religion. Had David observed the command of God given by Moses, that *the king should not multiply wives to himself*, he would, in all probability, have escaped a variety of sins, and consequently many misfortunes; but in those days it was the custom to have a great many wives; and as David had no more than was usual,

usual, we may suppose he did not think he was wrong in this particular.

Joab (either from affection, or to make his court to the king) invented an ingenious artifice in order to have Absalom recalled*; the thing was managed with great ingenuity and address, and without doubt David was greatly pleased with it; but much as he longed to see Absalom, he restrained his wishes, lest he should be thought to countenance his sin.

Absalom, we find, was remarkable for his beauty and insinuating discourse; he made use of these advantages to gain popularity; and perhaps persuaded the people to think that he was fully justified in killing Amnon, and that his father was too rigid in banishing him his presence on that account.

Though Joab had taken such pains to prevail on David to suffer Absalom to come back to Jerusalem, he had too much policy to be very urgent for his return to court, because it was likely, that his own interest and influence might be lessened by it.

It was very mortifying to a vain young man to be detained in obscurity; therefore, when Absalom found his messages were neglected, he determined to shew his resentment: what David felt when he saw Absalom, is easier to imagine than describe.

SECTION XVII.

ABSALOM FORMETH A CONSPIRACY, AND DELUDETH
THE PEOPLE.

From 2 Sam. Chap. xv.

AND it came to pass after this, that Absalom prepared him chariots, and horses, and fifty men to run before him.

* See 2 Sam. Chap. xiv.

And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city art thou? And he said, Thy servant is of one of the tribes of Israel.

And Absalom said unto him, See thy matters are good and right, but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee.

Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause, might come unto me, and I would do him justice.

And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, to put forth his hand, and took him and kissed him.

And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

And it came to pass that Absalom said unto the king, I pray thee let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed unto the LORD, in Hebron.

For thy servant vowed a vow while I abode at Geshur in Syria, saying, If the LORD shall bring me again, indeed to Jerusalem, then I will serve the LORD.

And the king said unto him, Go in peace. So he arose and went to Hebron.

But Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron.

And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, that were called, and they went in their simplicity, and they knew not anything.

And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered

offered sacrifices : and the conspiracy was strong ; for the people increased continually with Absalom.

And there came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom.

And David said unto all his servants that were with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee ; for we shall not else escape from Absalom : make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword.

And the king's servants said unto the king, Behold, thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my lord the king shall appoint.

And the king went forth, and all his household after him : and the king left ten women to keep the house.

And the king went forth, and all the people after him, and tarried in a place that was far off.

And all his servants passed on beside him : and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites, six hundred men which came after him from Gath passed on before the king.

Then said the king to Ittai the Gittite, Wherefore goest thou also with us ? return to thy place and abide with the king : for thou art a stranger, and also an exile. Whereas thou camest but yesterday, should I this day make thee to go up and down with us ? seeing I go whither I may, return thou, and take back thy brethren : mercy and truth be with thee.

And Ittai answered the king, and said, As the LORD liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be.

And David said to Ittai, Go and pass over. And Ittai the Gittite passed over and all his men, and all the little ones that were with him.

And

And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over: the king also himself passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over, toward the way of the wilderness.

And lo Zadok also, and all the Levites were with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God, and they set down the ark of God; and Abiathar went up, until all the people had done passing out of the city.

And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city; if I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me again, and shew me both it, and his habitation.

But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee: behold, hear am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.

The king said also unto Zadok, the priest, Art not thou a seer? return into the city in peace, and thy two sons with you, Ahimaaz thy son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar.

See I will tarry in the plain of the wilderness, until there come word from you to certify me.

Zadok therefore and Abiathar carried the ark of God again to Jerusalem; and they tarried there.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is reasonable to think, that David, as his sons grew up, gave each of them some patrimony; and perhaps Absalom's might be increased by presents from his grandfather, the king of Geshur. It seems he was determined to make a figure, and to have an equipage suitable to the king's eldest son; he had learnt how the princes of other nations were attended, and resolved to *multiply horses to himself*, instead of riding on a mule like his father. David's tenderness prevented his taking any measures

measures to repress the pride of Absalom, or correct his folly, and the next step of this ungracious son was to steal the hearts of the people. Nothing is easier, than for an artful person to prejudice the idle and ignorant part of a nation against its governors, for people are too apt to impute all the evils which are naturally attendant on the lower stations of life, to the oppression and injustice of those who have the administration of public affairs; and to think the king, in particular, accountable for every thing they suffer. It does not appear that David was at all remiss or negligent in state affairs; on the contrary, he determined all great causes himself, and had appointed men of abilities and integrity to decide others: those persons therefore, who listened to the wicked insinuations of his son, were very ungrateful.

David was struck with the utmost consternation, when he heard that Absalom had actually raised a conspiracy against him; and we may imagine, from his behaviour on this occasion, that the remembrance of his sin in respect to Uriah rushed full on his mind, and the threatening denounced by Nathan, that *evil should rise up against him out of his own house*: he therefore called no council, but, like a true penitent, humbly submitted to the dispensation of the Almighty. He had such a preference for Jerusalem on account of the Ark, that he could not bear to make that holy city a scene of blood, but resolved on an hasty flight, lest Absalom should come upon it suddenly.

Notwithstanding Absalom had drawn away so many, David had still some faithful friends left, who were determined to support him in every extremity.

It*is supposed that the Philistines, having heard of Absalom's rebellion, had resolved to take that opportunity

* Delany's Life of David.

of freeing themselves from their subjection to Israel; and for that purpose had driven out all those who favoured David's government, amongst whom was Ittai and his followers, whose arrival was very providential for David at this juncture; though they were by birth Philistines of Gath, it is imagined they were proselytes to the true religion.

David would not presume to have the Ark carried before him, when he was sensible he was suffering the chastisement of the LORD; for this reason he sent back the priests, after having settled the means of carrying on a correspondence with them.

No wonder that the people wept at such an affecting sight, for the bare relation of it must raise painful emotions in the mind of every reader. Let us suppose that we behold a king, venerable for his years and victories, renowned for wisdom and piety, and honoured as a prophet of the LORD, reduced to such distress, that he was forced to flee from the city which he had built and fortified, to seek shelter in a desert, whilst a whole country loudly lamented his fate !

SECTION XVIII.

DAVID ASCENDETH MOUNT OLIVET—AHITHOPHEL JOINETH WITH ABSALOM—HUSHAI FOLLOWETH DAVID.

From 2 Sam. Chap. xv.

AND David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that was with him, covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up.

And one told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O

LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.

And it came to pass, that when David was come to the top of the mount, where he worshipped God, behold, Hushai the Archite came to meet him, with his coat rent, and earth upon his head: Unto whom David said, If thou passest on with me, then thou shalt be a burden unto me.

But if thou return to the city, and say unto Absalom, I will be thy servant, O king; as I have been thy father's servant hitherto, so will I now also be thy servant: then mayest thou for me defeat the counsel of Ahithophel.

And hast thou not there with thee Zadok and Abiathar the priests? therefore it shall be, that what thing soever thou shalt hear out of the king's house, thou shalt tell it to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. Behold they have there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz Zadok's son, and Jonathan Abiathar's son: and by them ye shall send unto me every thing that ye can hear.

So Hushai David's friend came into the city, and Absalom came to Jerusalem.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

The noble ardour of mind for which David used to be remarkable was extinguished by sorrow; the bitterest arrows of affliction pierced his very soul; for what can equal the severe pangs which a tender parent feels for a child's ingratitude? Fears to which he had hitherto been a stranger, tore his distracted mind.

He did not however lose his hope and confidence in God, which were able to sustain him in the midst of these heavy distresses, as we may judge from the following

lowing words, uttered it is supposed when he ascended mount Olivet, or the mount of Olives, which was about a mile distant from Jerusalem*.

LORD, how are they increased that trouble me? many are they that rise up against me.

Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in GOD.

But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.

I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and He heard me out of his holy hill.

I laid me down and slept; I awaked, for the LORD sustained me.

I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about.

Arise, O LORD, save me, O my GOD; for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone: Thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.

Hear my prayer, O LORD, give ear to my supplications: in Thy faithfulness answer me, and in Thy righteousness.

And enter not into judgment with Thy servant: for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified.

For the enemy hath persecuted my soul, he hath smitten my life down to the ground: he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead.

Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me: my heart within me is desolate.

I remember the days of old, I meditate on all Thy works: I muse on the work of Thy hands.

I stretch forth my hands unto Thee: my soul thirsteth after Thee, as a thirsty land.

Hear me speedily, O LORD, my spirit faileth: hide not

* Psalms iii. and cxliii.

Thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.

Cause me to hear Thy loving kindness in the morning, for in Thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk, for I lift up my soul unto Thee.

Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies: I flee unto Thee to hide me.

Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God: Thy Spirit is good, lead me into the land of uprightness.

Quicken me, O LORD, for thy name's sake: for Thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble.

And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I am Thy servant.

When David heard that Ahithophel was in the conspiracy, he was exceedingly alarmed, because he was acquainted with all his affairs; the king therefore prayed to God to defeat his counsels: and the following psalm, so applicable to his situation, is supposed to have been composed by David on this occasion*.

Give ear to my prayer, O GOD: and hide not Thyself from my supplication.

Attend unto me, and hear me: I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise; because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked: for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me.

My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me.

Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me.

And I said, O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.

* Psalm lv.

Lo then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest.

Destroy, O LORD, and divide their tongues: for I have seen violence and strife in the city.

Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof: mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it.

Wickedness is in the midst thereof; deceit and guile depart not from her streets.

For it was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it; neither was it he that hated me, that did magnify himself against me, then I would have hid myself from him.

But it was thou, a man, mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance.

We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of GOD in company.

As for me, I will call upon GOD: and the LORD shall save me.

Evening and morning, and at noon will I pray, and cry aloud: and He shall hear my voice.

He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me: for there were many with me.

GOD shall hear and afflict them, even he that abideth of old: because they have no changes, therefore they fear not GOD.

He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him: he hath broken his covenant.

The words of his mouth were smother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.

Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.

But Thou, O GOD, shalt bring them down into the pit of

of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days, but I will trust in Thee.

The arrival of Hushai, David's friend, at this critical juncture, must be considered as an instance of God's goodness: Hushai was an able counsellor, but no warrior; therefore, the only way in which he could be serviceable to David was, by defeating the counsel of Ahithophel, which was the most likely means of preventing the evils of a civil war, of preserving the life of David, and of keeping Absalom from proceeding to further extremities.

SECTION XIX.

ZIBA BY DECEIT OBTAINETH THE INHERITANCE OF HIS MASTER—SHIMEI CURSETH DAVID.

From 2 Sam. Chap. xvi.

AND when David was a little past the top of the hill, behold Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him with a couple of asses saddled, and upon them two hundred loaves of bread, and an hundred bunches of raisins, and an hundred of summer-fruits, and a bottle of wine.

And the king said unto Ziba, What meanest thou by these? And Ziba said, The asses be for the king's household to ride on, and the bread and summer-fruit for the young men to eat, and the wine, that such as be faint in the wilderness may drink.

And the king said, And where is thy master's son? And Ziba said to the king, Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem: for he said, To-day shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father.

Then said the king to Ziba, behold, thine are all that pertained

pertained unto Mephibosheth. And Ziba said, I humbly beseech thee that I may find grace in thy sight, my lord O king.

And when king David came to Bahurim, behold thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera; he came forth, and cursed still as he came.

And he cast stones at David, and at all the servants of king David: and all the people, and all the mighty men were on his right hand, and on his left.

And thus said Shimei, when he cursed, Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial: The LORD hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned, and the LORD hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and behold thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man.

Then said Abishai the son of Zeruiah unto the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head.

And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse, because the LORD hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so? And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? let him alone, and let him curse: for the LORD hath bidden him.

It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day.

And as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along on the hill side over against him, and cursed as he went, and threw stones at him, and cast dust.

And the king and all the people that were with him came weary, and refreshed themselves there.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The refreshment which Ziba brought was very seasonable ; for having fled with so much precipitation, it is likely David was but scantily supplied with provisions : he supposed it to be a present from Mephibosheth ; but Ziba insinuated, that far from employing his thoughts about the king, Mephibosheth was contriving to bring about a revolution in his own favour. David's mind was so exceedingly hurt by his present distress, that he too readily gave ear to Ziba. If his own son was capable of acting so unnatural a part towards him, it was not at all incredible, that one of Saul's race should follow his example. In this instance, David certainly acted wrong, for he should have enquired into the truth before he transferred Mephibosheth's estate to one who might be suspected to have slandered him for his own interest : but let us not too severely censure David, till we have been in such a trying situation ourselves ; and in the mean while let us be instructed by his fault, to turn a deaf ear to the voice of flattery and defamation, and to condemn no one till we are sure that he deserves it.

Shimei's curses proceeded from the rancour of his own wicked heart, and we must not suppose that they were *inspired* of God. The meaning of David's expressions, *let him curse, for the LORD hath bidden, &c.* seems to be that Shimei's reproaches reminding David of his blood-guiltiness in respect to Uriah, he regarded him as an instrument of punishment from the LORD, because God certainly could have stopped his wicked tongue, and restrained his insults ; neither would Shimei have had an opportunity

opportunity of treating David in that opprobrious manner, if he had not been reduced to such an abject state, which he justly considered as the chastisement of the LORD: because, if he had not committed such sins, he would have been secure on his throne, and happy in his family.

It is probable that Shimei's curses produced the following petition to GOD*.

Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.

O my GOD, I trust in Thee, let me not be ashamed: let not mine enemies triumph over me.

Yea, let none that wait on Thee be ashamed; let them be ashamed which transgress without cause.

Shew me Thy ways, O LORD; teach me Thy paths.

Lead me in Thy truth and teach me: for Thou art the GOD of my salvation, on Thee do I wait all the day.

Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies, and Thy loving-kindnesses: for they have been ever of old.

Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to Thy mercy remember Thou me, for Thy goodness sake, O LORD.

Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will He teach sinners in the way.

Thee meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way.

All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant and testimonies.

For Thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity: for it is great.

What man is he that feareth the LORD: him shall He teach in the way that He shall choose.

* Psalm xxv.

His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth.

The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him: and He will shew them His covenant.

Mine eyes are ever towards the LORD: for He shall pluck my feet out of the net.

Turn Thee unto me, and have mercy upon me: for I am desolate and afflicted.

The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring Thou me out of my distresses.

Look upon mine affliction, and my pain, and forgive all my sins.

Consider mine enemies, for they are many, and they hate me with cruel hatred.

O keep my soul and deliver me: let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in Thee.

Let integrity and uprightness preserve me: for I wait on Thee.

Redeem Israel, O GOD, out of all his troubles.

SECTION XX.

**AHITHOPHEL'S COUNSEL DEFEATED BY HUSHAI—AMASA
MADE GENERAL IN THE ROOM OF JOAB.**

From 2 Sam. Chap. xvi.

AND Absalom, and all the people the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him.

And it came to pass when Hushai the Archite, David's friend, was come unto Absalom, that Hushai said unto Absalom, God save the king, God save the king.

And Absalom said to Hushai, Is this thy kindness to thy friend? why wentest thou not with thy friend? And Hushai said unto Absalom, Nay, but whom the LORD
and

and this people, and all the men of Israel choose, his will I be, and with him will I abide.

And again, Whom should I serve? should I not serve in the presence of his son? as I have served in thy father's presence, so will I be in thy presence.

Then said Absalom to Ahithophel, Give counsel among you what we shall do.

And the counsel of Ahithophel which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel, both with David and with Absalom.

And Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Let me now choose out twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this night.

And I will come upon him while he is weary and weak-handed, and will make him afraid: and all the people that are with him shall flee, and I will smite the king only.

And I will bring back all the people unto thee: the man whom thou seekest, is as if all returned: so all the people shall be in peace.

And the saying pleased Absalom well, and all the elders of Israel.

Then said Absalom, Call now Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear likewise what he saith.

And when Hushai was come to Absalom, Absalom spake unto him, saying, Ahithophel hath spoken after this manner: shall we do after his saying? if not, speak thou.

And Hushai said unto Absalom, the counsel that Ahithophel hath given, is not good at this time.

For (said Hushai) thou knowest thy father and his men, that they be mighty men, and they be chafed in their minds, as a bear robbed of her whelps in the field:

and thy father is a man of war, and will not lodge with the people.

Behold, he is hid now in some pit, or in some other place: and it will come to pass, when some of them be overthrown at the first, that whosoever heareth it, will say, There is slaughter among the people that follow Absalom.

And he also that is valiant, whose heart is as the heart of a lion, shall utterly melt: for all Israel knoweth that thy father is a mighty man, and they which be with him are valiant men.

Therefore I counsel, that all Israel be generally gathered unto thee, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, as the sand that is by the sea for multitude, and that thou go to battle in thine own person.

So shall we come upon him in some place where he shall be found, and we will light upon him as the dew falleth on the ground: and of him, and of all the men that are with him, there shall not be left so much as one.

Moreover, if he be gotten into a city, then shall all Israel bring ropes to that city, and we will draw it into the river, until there be not one small stone found there.

And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel: for the Lord had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the Lord might bring evil upon Absalom.

Then said Hushai unto Zadok and to Abiathar the priests, Thus and thus did Ahithophel counsel Absalom and the eldest of Israel: and thus and thus have I counselled.

Now therefore send quickly, and tell David, saying, Lodge not this night in the plains of the wilderness, but

but speedily pass over: lest the king be swallowed up, and all the people that are with him.

Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz staid by En-rogel (for they might not be seen to come into the city.) And a wench went and told them! and they went and told king David.

Nevertheless, a lad saw them, and told Absalom: but they went both of them away quickly, and came to a man's house in Bahurim, which had a well in his court, whither they went down.

And the women took and spread a covering over the well's mouth, and spread ground corn thereon: and the thing was not known.

And when Absalom's servants came to the woman to the house, they said, Where is Ahimaaz and Jonathan? and the woman said unto them, They be gone over the brook of water. And when they had sought and could not find them, they returned to Jerusalem.

And it came to pass after they were departed, that they came up out of the well, and went and told king David, and said unto David, Arise and pass quickly over the water: for thus hath Ahithophel counselled against you.

Then David arose, and all the people that were with him, and they passed over Jordan: by the morning light there lacked not one of them that was not gone over Jordan.

And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his houshold in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father.

Then David came to Mahanaim: and Absalom passed over Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him.

And

And Absalom made Amasa captain of the host instead of Joab.

So Israel and Absalom pitched in the land of Gilead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

David imagined that Absalom would make haste to Jerusalem, and so it proved: it seems, he arrived there a considerable time before the king and his followers reached the banks of the river Jordan; for when Hushai came to the city, he found Absalom in quiet possession, and just going to call a council. Absalom supposing Hushai to be inviolably attached to David, was amazed at being accosted by him; but on Hushai's assuring him *that whom the LORD and all the men of Israel should choose, his would he be*, he immediately resolved to repose entire confidence in him.

Hushai in this instance was not sincere; but we must consider, that he had no other possible way of defeating the counsels of Ahithophel; and if a *departure from truth* can in any instance be justified, surely it is in such a case as this, where it was evidently practised to *prevent a man from murdering his FATHER and his KING*.

The advice which Ahithophel gave, though exceedingly wicked, was very likely to succeed in getting the king into Absalom's power; but in mercy to David, the LORD ordained that Hushai's counsel should prevail. The object Hushai seems to have had in view was, to gain time, in order to concert proper measures for preventing bloodshed, and restoring the peace of the nation.

When David, in consequence of Hushai's advice, had passed the river Jordan, he is supposed to have composed the following psalm*:

* Psalm lxxi.

In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust, let me never be put to confusion.

Deliver me in Thy righteousness, and cause me to escape; incline Thine ear unto me, and save me.

Be Thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: Thou hast given commandment to save me, for Thou art my rock and my fortress.

Deliver me, O my GOD, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man.

For Thou art my hope, O LORD GOD: Thou art my trust from my youth.

I am as a wonder unto many; but Thou art my strong refuge.

Let my mouth be filled with Thy praise, and with Thy honour all the day.

Cast me not off in the time of old age, forsake me not when my strength faileth.

For my enemies speak against me; and they that lay wait for my soul, take council together;

Saying, GOD hath forsaken him: persecute and take him, for there is none to deliver him.

O GOD, be not far from me: O my GOD, make haste for my help.

But I will hope continually, and will yet praise Thee more and more.

My mouth shall shew forth Thy righteousness, and Thy salvation all the day: for I know not the numbers thereof.

I will go in the strength of the LORD GOD: I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of thine only.

O GOD, Thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared Thy wondrous works.

Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O GOD, forsake me not; until I have shewed Thy strength unto this generation, and Thy power to every one that is to come.

Thy

Thy righteousness also, O GOD, is very high, who hast done great things: O GOD, who is like unto thee?

Thou which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shall quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth.

Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side.

I will also praise Thee with the psaltery, even Thy truth, O my GOD: unto Thee will I sing with the harp, O Thou holy one of Israel.

My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto Thee: and my soul which thou hast redeemed.

My tongue also shall talk of Thy righteousness all the day long: for they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt.

Great as David's present distress was, he had been redeemed from a severer one, the fear of GOD's perpetual anger for his heinous sins; his repentance had been accepted, and forgiveness promised. David knew that the LORD was also able to remove the punishment he suffered, and the HOLY SPIRIT gave him assurance, that when the purposes of his reformation and the edification of the world were answered by his chastisement, he should again rejoice before the LORD.

No one deserved death more than Ahithophel; and despair, which generally succeeds the disappointment of wicked plots, suggested the desperate deed of putting an end to his own life. When David heard that Ahithophel his formidable enemy was dead, it was natural for his heart to rejoice; and the following psalm seems particularly adapted to this occasion, because it is likely that being at Mahanaim, he recollected the deliverance of his forefather Jacob from the hand of Esau, and was encouraged

raged to hope, that prayer and penitence would induce the LORD to deliver him also from the pursuit of his unnatural son*.

I will bless the LORD at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth.

My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.

O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together.

I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.

They looked unto Him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.

This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him; and saved him out of all his troubles.

The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them.

O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him.

O fear the LORD, ye His saints: for there is no want to them that fear Him.

The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.

Come ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?

Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.

Depart from evil, and do good: seek peace and pursue it.

The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.

The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.

*Psalm xxxiv.

The

The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth and delivereth them out of all their troubles.

The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart: and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.

He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.

Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.

The LORD redeemeth the souls of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.

SECTION XXI.

SUCCOURS BROUGHT TO THE KING—DAVID GIVETH A CHARGE CONCERNING ABSALOM—ABSALOM HANGETH IN AN OAK—THE KING MOURNETH FOR ABSALOM.

From 2 Samuel, Chap. xvii, xviii.

AND it came to pass when David was come to Mahanaim, that Shobi the son of Nahash of Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and Machir the son of Ammiel of Lo-debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite of Rogelim, brought beds and basons, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched corn, and beans, and lentiles, and parched pulse;

And honey, and butter, and sheep, and cheese of kine for David, and for the people that were with him to eat; for they said, the people is hungry, and weary, and thirsty in the wilderness.

And David numbered the people that were with him and set captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds over them.

And David sent forth a third part of the people under
the

the hand of Joab, and a third part under the hand of Abishai the son of Zeruah Joab's brother, and a third part under the hand of Ittai the Gittite: and the king said unto the people, I will surely go forth with you myself also.

But the people answered thou shalt not go forth: for if we flee away, they will not care for us; neither if half of us die, will they care for us: but now thou art worth ten thousand of us, therefore now it is better that thou succour us out of the city.

And the king said unto them, what seemeth you best, I will do. And the king stood by the gate side, and all the people came out by hundreds, and by thousands.

And the king commanded Joab, and Abishai, and Ittai, saying, Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom. And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains charge concerning Absalom.

So the people went out into the field against Israel: and the battle was in the wood of Ephraim;

Where the people of Israel were slain before the servants of David, and there was there a great slaughter that day of twenty thousand men.

For the battle was there scattered over the face of all the country; and the wood devoured more people that day, than the sword devoured.

And Absalom met the servants of David; and Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth, and the mule that was under him went away.

And a certain man saw it, and told Joab, and said, Behold I saw Absalom hanged in an oak.

And Joab said unto the man that told him, And behold, thou sawest him, and why didst thou not smite him there

there to the ground, and I would have given thee ten shekels of silver, and a girdle?

And the man said unto Joab, Though I should receive a thousand shekels of silver in mine hand, yet would I not put forth mine hand against the king's son: for in our hearing the king charged thee, and Abishai, and Ittai, saying, Beware that none touch the young man Absalom.

Otherwise, I should have wrought falsehood against mine own life: for there is no matter hid from the king, and thou thyself wouldest have set thyself against me.

Then said Joab, I may not tarry thus with thee. And he took three darts in his hand and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak.

And ten young men that bare Joab's armour, compassed about and smote Absalom, and slew him.

And Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing after Israel: for Joab held back the people.

And they took Absalom and cast him into a great pit in the wood, and laid a very great heap of stones upon him: and all Israel fled every one to his tent.

Now Absalom in his life-time had taken and reared up for himself a pillar, which is in the king's dale: for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance: and he called the pillar after his own name, and it is called unto this day, Absalom's place.

Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok, Let me now run and bear the king tidings, how that the Lord hath avenged him of his enemies.

And Joab said unto him, thou shalt not bear tidings this day, but thou shalt bear tidings another day; but this day thou shalt bear no tidings, because the king's son is dead.

Then

Then said Joab to Cush, Go tell the king what thou hast seen. And Cush bowed himself unto Joab, and ran.

Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok yet again to Joab, But howsoever, let me, I pray thee, also run after Cush. And Joab said, wherefore wilt thou run, my son, seeing thou hast no tidings ready?

But howsoever (said he) let me run. And he said unto him, Run. Then Ahimaaz ran by the way of the plain, and overran Cush.

And David sat between the two gates: and the watchman went up to the roof over the gate unto the wall, and lift up his eyes, and looked, and behold a man running alone.

And the watchman cried, and told the king. And the king said, If he be alone, there is tidings in his mouth. And he came apace, and drew near.

And the watchman saw another man running; and the watchman called unto the porter, and said, Behold, another man running alone. And the king said, He also bringeth tidings.

And the watchman said, Methinketh the running of the foremost, is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok. And the king, said, He is a good man, and cometh with good tidings.

And Ahimaaz called, and said unto the king, All is well. And he fell down to the earth upon his face before the king, and said, Blessed be the LORD thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lift up their hand against my LORD the king.

And the king said, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Ahimaaz answered, When Joab sent the king's servant, and me thy servant, I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what it was.

And

And the king said unto him, Turn aside, and stand here. And he turned aside and stood still.

And behold, Cushie came, and Cushie said, Tidings, my lord the king: for the LORD hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee.

And the king said unto Cushie, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Cushie answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is.

And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

David experienced the happy effects of his faith and piety; for it pleased God to encourage many faithful subjects and brave soldiers to espouse his cause, and they resorted to him from all quarters, so that in a few days he had a powerful army to resist Absalom and his rebellious followers. Provisions also were brought to him in abundance, by persons of the greatest distinction throughout all the regions round about.

Shobi was that son of Nahash who is supposed to have been made viceroy of Rabbah by David. Machir was the person who had maintained Mephibosheth; he seems to have been a man of a most benevolent disposition, ready at all times to succour men in distress. Barzillai was a worthy man, who also knew the best use to which riches can be applied.

As Absalom was bent on his impious and rebellious scheme of establishing himself on the throne by the murder of his venerable parent, David was under a necessity of

of using means for his own security: he could not sacrifice his friends to the impetuous rage of a head-strong young man; neither could he, consistently with honour and religion, desert the throne to which he had been raised by the immediate appointment of God, and the universal consent of the people. He was the LORD's *anointed*, and as such he bore the sword of justice, with which it was his duty to chastise sedition and rebellion, even in the person of his own son. His forces are supposed to have amounted to 4000 men. Unwilling to spill the blood of his subjects, or draw his sword against a rebellious son, David yielded to the intreaties of his servants, and did not go forth with his troops. There is no doubt but that the pious king seized this opportunity of entreating the LORD to complete his deliverance, for his psalms abound with sentiments adapted to such an occasion.

The excessive tenderness which David expressed for Absalom shews his character in a most amiable light; he was willing to impute his rashness to youth and inexperience, therefore he intreated his generals and captains to spare Absalom for his sake, hoping that he would reform.

Notwithstanding the superiority of the rebel army, and the restraint which David's kind commands, in favour of Absalom, had laid upon his party, this wicked son could not escape the punishment due to such unparalleled crimes; the justice of God overtook him; and his hair, which had been his ornament and pride, became instrumental to his destruction: he was consigned of God to that very punishment to which the law condemned traitors and parricides, viz. hanging on a tree.

Joab was of a very impetuous temper, and knowing the good consequences that were likely to ensue, notwithstanding the king's commands to the contrary, he
determined

determined to pierce the rebellious heart of this unnatural son; and the soldiers finding that Absalom was dead, shewed their detestation of his crime, by throwing stones on his carcase.

While the two armies were engaged, the poor king sat in the gate, equally dreading a victory or defeat: at length Ahimaaz and Cushi were discerned by the watchman. David flattered himself that their intelligence was of the most pleasing kind, and we find Ahimaaz evaded the telling him immediately of the death of Absalom; but when Cushi arrived, David's fears were confirmed. His lamentation needs no comment. It is impossible for any words to be more expressive of the grief of a tender parent, for the untimely death of a wicked son, who was cut off in the midst of his sinful course. Who can read it without feeling a sympathetic concern for the sorrows of this truly affectionate father, and a detestation of the crimes of the son? May the fate of Absalom be a warning to all disobedient youths, who with unfeeling ingratitude rend the hearts of those that have a right to their kindest attention; for they may regard it as a certainty, that God will punish them for such unnatural wickedness, in an exemplary manner.

SECTION XXII.

JOAB REPROVETH THE KING.

DAVID CEASETH TO MOURN FOR ABSALOM.

From 2 Samuel, Chap. xix.

AND it was told Joab, Behold the king weepeth and mourneth for Absalom.

And the victory that day was turned into mourning unto all the people: for the people heard say that day how the king was grieved for his son.

And

And the people gat them by stealth that day into the city, as people being ashamed steal away when they flee in battle.

But the king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!

And Joab came into the house to the king, and said, Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants, which this day have saved thy life, and the lives of thy sons, and of thy daughters, and the lives of thy wives: In that thou lovest thine enemies and hatest thy friends; for thou hast declared this day, that thou regardest neither princes, nor servants; for this day I perceive, that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died this day, then it had pleased thee well.

Now therefore arise, go forth, and speak comfortably unto thy servants: for I swear by the LORD, if thou go not forth, there will not tarry one with thee this night; and that will be worse unto thee than all the evil that befell thee from thy youth until now.

Then the king rose, and sat in the gate: and they told unto all the people, saying, Behold, the king doth sit in the gate: and all the people came before the king: for Israel had fled every man to his tent.

And all the people were at strife throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, The king saved us out of the hand of our enemies, and he delivered us out of the hand of the Philistines, and now he is fled out of the land for Absalom.

And Absalom whom we anointed over us, is dead in battle: now therefore why speak ye not a word of bringing the king back? And king David sent to Zadok and to Abiathar the priests, saying, Speak unto the elders of Judah, saying, Why are ye the last to bring the king back

to his house? (seeing the speech of all Israel is come to the king, even to his house.)

Ye are my brethren, ye are my bones and my flesh: wherefore then are ye the last to bring back the king? And say ye to Amasa, Art thou not of my bone, and of my flesh? God do so to me and more also, if thou be not captain of the host before me continually in the room of Joab.

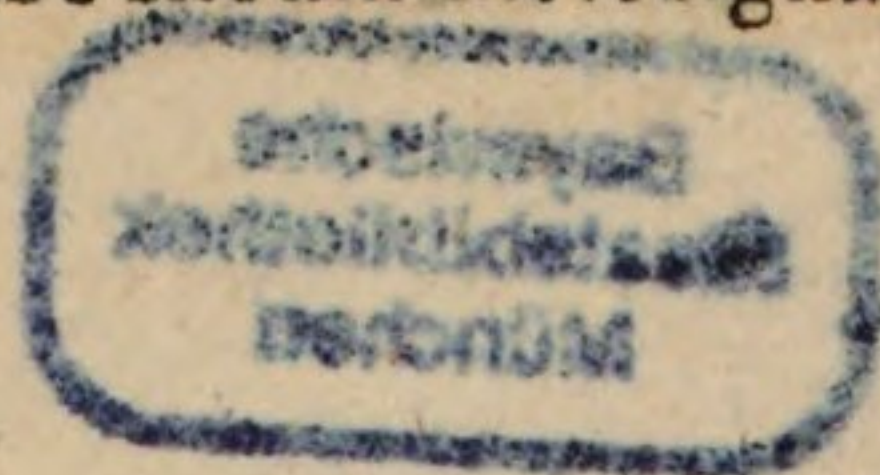
And he bowed the heart of all the men of Judah, even as the heart of one man, so that they sent this word unto the king, Return thou and all thy servants.

So the king returned, and came to Jordan; and Judah came to Gilgal, to go to meet the king, to conduct the king over Jordan.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Joab, knowing that if David abandoned himself to sorrow, and the ardour of the people was suffered to abate, many bad consequences might ensue, resolved to expostulate with him: had he done this with tenderness and delicacy, he would have acted a prudent and a friendly part; but Joab had a heart steeled to all the delicate feelings of humanity, he therefore could make no allowance for one whose mind was habituated to the tenderest sensibility. Nothing could be more insolent than Joab's address to his sovereign; however it was not a time for David to express displeasure, and he immediately acquiesced with his desire.

David had many friends amongst the tribes of Israel, who, as soon as they heard that Absalom was dead, endeavoured to persuade the rest to return to their duty; which they did with as much zeal as they had but a short time before rushed into rebellion; their only contention now was, which tribe should most signalize their loyalty
and



and affection. Amasa was the commander of the tribe of Judah, and as the men of Judah under him had taken such a distinguished part against David, they were apprehensive of his resentment; but, as the king longed for peace, he prudently resolved to win them by mildness, in which we find he happily succeeded. We cannot be surprized at the offer which David made to Amasa, when we reflect on the arrogant and contemptuous treatment he had received from Joab; and when we likewise consider, that he could not have regained possession of Jerusalem without besieging it, if the tribe of Judah had continued to resist him. It is true, that Joab had hitherto adhered to David's interest; but he had dared to kill the king's son contrary to his express command, when he might have taken him prisoner; and had lately threatened David with a fresh rebellion, unless he acted entirely by his direction; so that it was highly necessary to remove him, and no one was so proper to succeed as Amasa.

David had now the happy prospect of being restored to the peaceable possession of the throne of Israel; and what was still more desirable, he had the comfortable assurance, that he should again present himself before the LORD in his holy tabernacle.

The 119th psalm seems to be entirely composed of such sentiments as must naturally have arisen in the mind of David during his absence from Jerusalem, and on his return to it; we may therefore apply it to this part of his history.

Blessed are the undefiled in the way; who walk in the law of the LORD.

Blessed are they that keep His testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart.

O that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes!

I will keep Thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.

I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto Thy ways.

I have gone astray like a lost sheep: seek Thy servant: for I do not forget Thy commandments.

Great are Thy tender mercies, O LORD: quicken me according to Thy judgments.

Consider how I love Thy precepts: quicken me, O LORD, according to Thy loving-kindness.

I will delight myself in Thy statutes; I will not forget Thy word.

Remove from me reproach and contempt: for I have kept Thy testimonies.

I have chosen the way of truth: Thy judgments have I laid before me.

Let Thy mercies come also unto me, O LORD: even Thy salvation, according to Thy word.

So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in Thy word.

This is my comfort in my affliction: for Thy word hath quickened me.

The proud have had me greatly in derision: yet have I not declined from Thy law.

I remembered Thy judgments of old, O LORD: and have comforted myself.

Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.

I entreated Thy favour with my whole heart: be merciful unto me according to Thy word.

I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies.

I made haste and delayed not to keep Thy commandments.

Thou hast dealt well with Thy servant, O LORD, according to Thy word.

Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Thy word.

It is good for me that I have been afflicted: that I might learn Thy statutes.

They that fear Thee, will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in Thy word.

Let those that fear Thee turn unto me, and those that have known Thy testimonies.

O how I love Thy law! it is my meditation all the day.

How sweet are Thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth.

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

Accept, I beseech Thee, the free-will offerings of my mouth, O LORD, and teach me Thy judgments.

Mine eyes fail for Thy salvation, and for the word of Thy righteousness.

Order my steps in Thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.

I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried: I hoped in Thy word.

Mine eyes prevent the night-watches, that I might meditate in Thy word.

Seven times a day do I praise Thee: because of Thy righteous judgments.

Great peace have they which love Thy law: and nothing shall offend them.

Unless Thy law had been my delight, I should then have perished in mine affliction.

Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of Thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.*

* I have ventured, without the authority of the learned, to apply some parts of the 119th psalm to this occasion. The whole might have been introduced with advantage; but I am obliged, in the course of this work, to reject many noble passages, to avoid being too voluminous.

SECTION XXIII.

SHIMEI PARDONED—THE KING GOETH OVER JORDAN.

From 2 Samuel, Chap. xix.

AND Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite, which was of Bahurim, hasted, and came down with the men of Judah, to meet king David.

And there were a thousand men of Benjamin with him, and Ziba the servant of the house of Saul, and his fifteen sons and his twenty servants with him, and they went over Jordan before the king.

And there went over a ferry-boat to carry over the king's household, and to do what he thought good: and Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king as he was come over Jordan; and said unto the king, Let not my LORD impute iniquity unto me, neither do thou remember that which thy servant did perversely the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to his heart.

For thy servant doth know that I have sinned: therefore behold, I am come the first this day of all the house of Joseph, to go down to meet my lord the king.

But Abishai the son of Zeruiah answered and said, Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the LORD's anointed?

And David said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah, that ye should this day be adversaries unto me? shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel? for do not I know, that I am this day king over Israel? therefore the king said unto Shimei, Thou shalt not die; and the king sware unto him.

And Barzillai the Gileadite came down from Rogelim,
and

and went over Jordan with the king, to conduct him over Jordan.

Now Barzillai was a very aged man, even fourscore years old, and he had provided the king of sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim: for he was a very great man.

And the king said unto Barzillai, Come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem.

And Barzillai said unto the king, How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem?

I am this day fourscore years old: and can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing-women? wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king?

Thy servant will go a little way over Jordan with the king: and why should the king recompense it me with such a reward? let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father, and of my mother:

But behold thy servant Chimham, let him go over with my lord the king, and do to him what shall seem good unto thee.

And the king answered, Chimham shall go over with me, and I will do to him that which shall seem good unto thee: and whatsoever thou shalt require of me, that will I do for thee.

And all the people went over Jordan: and when the king was come over, the king kissed Barzillai, and blessed him: and he returned unto his own place.

Then the king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went on with him: and all the people of Judah conducted the king, and also half the people of Israel.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The manner in which David acted towards Shimei

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reflects

reflects great honour on his memory: had not his character for humanity and gentleness of manners been generally known, it cannot be supposed, that one who had so vilely insulted him in the day of distress would have ventured to cast himself upon his mercy. The king was resolved not to interrupt the joy of reconciliation with his people, by shedding the blood of a reviler, whose reproaches, though undeserved, had contributed to bring his mind into that humble state, which had made his prayers acceptable to the LORD. What an excellent example has he left for the imitation of those who meet with contumely and reproach!

Barzillai was a faithful subject, and his sovereign was not insensible to his merit. This was a happy day to David; for he had opportunities of exercising his mercy, benevolence, and gratitude.

SECTION XXIV.

A CONTEST BETWEEN THE TRIBES.

A REBELLION ENSUES.

From 2 Samuel, Chap. xix, xx.

AND behold, all the men of Israel came to the king, and said unto the king, Why have our brethren, the men of Judah, stolen thee away, and have brought the king and his household, and all David's men with him over Jordan?

And all the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, Because the king is near of kin to us: wherefore then be ye angry for this matter? have we eaten at all of the king's cost? or hath he given us any gift.

And the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, and said, We have ten parts in the king, and we have also more right in David than ye: why then did ye despise

despise us, that our advice should not be first had in bringing back our king? And the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel.

And there happened to be there a man of Belial, whose name was Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite; and he blew a trumpet, and said, We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: Every man to his tents, O Israel.

So every man of Israel went up from after David, and followed Sheba the son of Bichri: but the men of Judah clave unto their king, from Jordan even to Jerusalem.

And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king, and had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace.

And it came to pass, when he was come to Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king said unto him, Wherefore wentest not thou with me, Mephibosheth? And he answered, My lord, O king, my servant deceived me: for thy servant said, I will saddle me an ass, that I may ride thereon, and go to the king: because thy servant is lame.

And he hath slandered thy servant unto my lord the king; but my lord the king is an angel of God: do therefore what is good in thine eyes.

For all of my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king: yet didst thou set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table. What right therefore have I yet to cry any more unto the king. And the king said unto him, Why speakest thou any more of thy matters? I have said, Thou and Ziba divide the land.

And Mephibosheth said unto the king, Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is very easy to raise commotions in a state, but hard to quell them; for when fellow-subjects have been used to regard each other as enemies, animosities break out on every trifling occasion; as was the case in the present instance. Perhaps David was impolitic in sending to the men of Judah; but as it was his own tribe, we can scarcely wonder that he was solicitous for their countenancing him on this occasion; neither was it safe for him to go to Jerusalem, till he had their assurance, that they would yield him quiet possession of it. When he knew that the gates of the city would be opened to him, he began his march, never supposing that the other tribes would expect a particular invitation; however, pride and jealousy made them suspect him of partiality to Judah; and the imprudent haughty answer which this tribe returned to their remonstrances, blew up the flame. Sheba being a Benjamite, had a personal hatred to David, on account of his having been appointed of God to supersede Saul's family; he therefore took advantage of the present dispute, with a view to his own interest.

The joy, which David would otherwise have felt at his return to Jerusalem, was greatly damped by these fresh contentions; but he still trusted in the Lord.

Mephibosheth's answer to the king's enquiry, why he had not attended him? implied, that it was his wish to have done so; but David's reply gives us reason to suppose that he did not believe him sincere; though, for the sake of Jonathan, he was contented to pass the matter over without a scrutiny, which he feared might end in the disgrace of Mephibosheth. Ziba had done the king very acceptable services, and his story was a probable one. If Mephibosheth was able to ride, surely he might
have

have followed, and prevented credit being given to it; so we cannot wonder, that David did not readily give ear to his excuses; for, after the benefits he had conferred on Mephibosheth, he must have been greatly hurt at such an appearance of ingratitude and inattention to his distress. It is hard to decide *which* deserved blame, Mephibosheth or Ziba; but from Mephibosheth's ready acquiescence, we may conclude that David conducted himself in this affair according to the rules of integrity and honour.

SECTION XXV.

AMASA MADE GENERAL BY DAVID—SLAIN BY JOAB.

From 2 Sam. Chap. xx.

AND David came to his house at Jerusalem. Then said the king to Amasa, Assemble me the men of Judah within three days, and be thou here present.

So Amasa went to assemble the men of Judah; but he tarried longer than the set time which he had appointed him.

And David said to Abishai, Now shall Sheba the son of Bichri do us more harm than did Absalom: take thou thy lord's servants, and pursue after him, lest he get him fenced cities, and escape us.

And there went out after him Joab's men, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, and all the mighty men: and they went out of Jerusalem, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri.

When they were at the great stone which is in Gibeon, Amasa went before them: and Joab's garment that he had put on was girded unto him, and upon it a girdle with a sword fastened upon his loins in the sheath thereof, and as he went forth it fell out.

And Joab said to Amasa, Art thou in health, my brother; and Joab took Amasa by the beard with the right hand to kiss him.

But Amasa took no heed to the sword that was in Joab's hand: so he smote him therewith in the fifth rib, and shed out his bowels to the ground, and struck him not again, and he died: so Joab and Abishai his brother pursued after Sheba the son of Bichri.

And one of Joab's men stood by him, and said, He that favoureth Joab, and he that is for David, let him go after Joab.

And Amasa wallowed in blood in the midst of the high-way: and when the man saw that all the people stood still, he removed Amasa out of the high-way into the field, and cast a cloth upon him, when he saw that every one that came by him stood still.

When he was removed out of the high-way, all the people went on after Joab, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri.

And he went through all the tribes of Israel unto Abel, and unto Beth-maachah, and all the Berites: and they were gathered together, and went also after him.

And they came and besieged him in Abel of Beth-maachah, and they cast up a bank against the city, and it stood in the trench: and all the people that were with Joab, battered the wall to throw it down.

Then cried a wise woman out of the city, Hear, hear; say, I pray you, unto Joab, come near hither, that I may speak with thee.

And when he was come near unto her, the woman said, Art thou Joab? And he answered, I am he. Then she said unto him, Hear the words of thine handmaid. And he answered, I do hear.

Then she spake, saying, They were wont to speak in old

old times, saying, They shall surely ask counsel at Abel: and so they ended the matter.

I am one of them that are peaceable and faithful in Israel; thou seekest to destroy a city and a mother in Israel: why wilt thou swallow up the inheritance of the LORD? And Joab answered and said, Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy.

The matter is not so: but a man of mount Ephraim (Sheba the son of Bichri by name) hath lift up his hand against the king, even against David: deliver him only and I will depart from the city. And the woman said unto Joab, Behold, his head shall be thrown to thee over the wall.

Then the woman went unto all the people in her wisdom, and they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri, and cast it out to Joab: and he blew a trumpet, and they retired from the city, every man to his tent: and Joab returned to Jerusalem unto the king.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We find that David was resolved to remove Joab from the supreme command of the army, agreeably to his promise to Amasa, for his insolence was insupportable. Amasa not being able to make such quick dispatch as the case required, David was greatly disquieted, which made him send Abishai, with the Cherethites, &c. who met with Amasa.

Joab it is supposed joined then, with a determined resolution to put Amasa to death, and retain the command of the army in defiance of the king: when he had perpetrated this wicked act, he professed himself in David's interest; and as there was an absolute necessity to go against the rebels, the people without hesitation followed him.

The arguments used by the wise woman were persuasive and powerful ; though, according to our translation, they are in a great measure unintelligible to us ; but it plainly appears, that she meant to expostulate with Joab for not first offering terms of peace, before he proceeded to the destruction of a city, which was part of the LORD's inheritance ; assuring him, that had he informed them of the cause, the inhabitants would soon have ended the matter, by complying with any reasonable demands. The treachery of Joab in respect to Amasa, must strike every good mind with abhorrence ; and it is needless to comment on it.

SECTION XXVI.

A FAMINE IN ISRAEL *.

As soon as the leader was cut off, the sedition was at an end, and peace was established, but another dreadful calamity soon fell upon the land of Israel, a three years famine. This is among the evils which is generally understood by people, who have religious minds, as coming immediately from the hand of God, to bring men to repentance and reformation. David, in the present instance, considered it in that light, and enquired of the LORD ; by which means he learnt, *that it was for Saul and his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.*

It has been related in a former part of this history, that Joshua made a league with the Gibeonites ; in consequence of which, the Israelites were bound, in the most solemn manner, to suffer them to live quietly amongst them. Saul, it seems, had violated this treaty,

* 2 Sam. xxi.

and killed a number of them in times of peace without the least provocation, in order that his friends might possess their cities: many of the Israelites had been instrumental to his injustice; God was dishonoured by the people's having broken a covenant made in his holy name, and his religion would have been despised, if the nations around had had cause given them to suppose it admitted of a breach of a public treaty.

The Gibeonites, it is likely, were by this time so increased, that they were distressed for towns to dwell in; and the Israelites, in all probability, inattentive to their necessities, made themselves partakers of Saul's sin, by *retaining* those cities, which were the lawful property of the Gibeonites. National sin calls for national punishment; and according to the Jewish constitution, it was necessary that atonement should be made for every breach of the Divine law.

As soon as the *cause* of the famine was known, David's next care was to find out the remedy; for this purpose he applied to the Gibeonites, to learn in what manner he could give them satisfaction. They demanded to have seven men of the family of Saul delivered into their hands; this requisition was consistent with their ideas of justice; therefore David was commanded of God to comply with their desire, and seven men were accordingly delivered to them, whom they hanged. As it was left to David to fix on the persons, who were by their deaths to make satisfaction to the Gibeonites, he carefully saved alive those who were the immediate decendants of Saul and Jonathan, namely Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, and Micah the son of Mephibosheth, with the four sons of Micah; by which means he performed the oath which he swore in the cave of En-gedi; *that HE would not cut off Saul's seed after him, to destroy his name out*

of

of his father's house ; and the covenant he made with Jonathan, to shew kindness to his posterity. The men who were hanged were inconsiderable persons, and they most likely had been actually concerned with Saul against the Gibeonites, in which case they met with the fate they deserved ; but if they were innocent victims to public justice, as they died for the good of their country, God doubtless removed them to a better state.

A full vindication of David's conduct in this transaction has been written by a learned author, and satisfactory reasons given, why God required such an expiation to be made ; but it is of little use, to the generality of readers, to employ their time and thoughts upon this or any obscure passage, since we may be certain it is of no real importance to us to investigate them : for every part of scripture, *essentially necessary to be understood, in order to obtain eternal happiness*, is so plainly expressed, that the meanest understanding may comprehend it ; though persons who have leisure and abilities are by no means forbidden to employ their researches into what is difficult, provided they do not, "*in the pride of human reason*, dispute the *truth* of DIVINE REVELATION, or say in their hearts, GOD is * unjust, or unfaithful."

When the Gibeonites had received full satisfaction, and the famine ceased, David greatly rejoiced, and he is supposed to have written the following psalm on this occasion.

† *Praise waiteth for thee, O GOD, in Sion : and unto Thee shall the vow be performed.*

O Thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.

Iniquities prevail against me : as for our transgressions, Thou shalt purge them away.

Blessed is the man whom Thou choolest and causest to

* Patrick's Comment.

† Psalm lxxv.

approach unto Thee, that he may dwell in Thy courts : we shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, even of Thy holy temple.

By terrible things in righteousness wilt Thou answer us, O GOD of our salvation : who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off, upon the sea.

Which by his strength setteth fast the mountains ; being girded with power.

Which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people.

They also that dwell in the uttermost parts are afraid at Thy tokens : Thou makest the out-goings of the morning and evening to rejoice.

Thou visitest the earth and waterest it : Thou greatly enrichest it with the river of GOD which is full of water : Thou preparest them corn, when Thou hast so provided for it.

Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly : Thou settlest the furrows thereof : Thou makest it soft with showers, Thou blessest the springing thereof.

Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness, and Thy paths drop fatness.

They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness : and the little hills rejoice on every side.

The pastures are clothed with flocks ; the vallies also are covered over with corn ; they shout for joy, they also sing.

In this psalm David acknowledges, that praise is due to GOD from all mankind, but particularly from those of SION, where the holy sanctuary was. He observes that they should not be discouraged by their iniquity from addressing their petitions to the LORD, since he had graciously pardoned the sins of him and his people. He confesses the almighty power of GOD, who is able to rule the stormy elements, and the turbulent passions of the human

human mind, and to shew forth his glory, in remotest regions, by the wonderful works of nature. David then expresses his gratitude for the late relief from famine, acknowledging that the bounties of harvest are the gifts of Divine Providence, since it would be in vain for the husbandmen to pursue the labours of the field, unless the LORD sent His blessing on the *land* to give fertility to it. It is needless to remark, that this psalm is of general application.

We have in this section an account of four successive wars with the Philistines, which, though related in very few words, there is reason to believe, lasted a considerable time. It is imagined that Absalom's rebellion encouraged the Philistines to begin them.

The Philistines had at this time several men of extraordinary stature amongst them, all it seems of the kindred of Goliath; and though they had experienced the little use of such men in an army, yet they cast their eyes on these, now flattering themselves, that by their help they might retrieve their honour, and take revenge upon David. But the same Almighty power that had enabled this king, when an inexperienced youth, to defeat the gigantic champion of the Philistines, assisted his valiant officers in destroying the monstrous descendants of this arrogant boaster, who, like their progenitor, confided in human strength and vain idols.

We may observe that the people of Israel entertained a high degree of affection for their venerable king, and would not suffer him, as he was grown old and feeble, to risk a life so valuable to them in any future battle.

When these wars were happily ended, and David was in perfect peace both at home and abroad, he is thought to have published the thanksgiving, which is in the 22d chapter of the 2d of Samuel.

SECTION

SECTION XXVII.

DAVID NUMBERETH THE PEOPLE—A PESTILENCE
ENSUES.

From 1 Chron. Chap. xxi, xxii.

AND Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.

And David said to Joab, and to the rulers of the people, Go, number Israel from Beer-sheba even to Dan; and bring the number of them to me, that I may know it.

And Joab answered, The LORD make his people an hundred times so many more as they be: but, my lord the king, are they not all my lord's servants? why then doth my lord require this thing? why will he be a cause of trespass to Israel.

Nevertheless the king's word prevailed against Joab: wherefore Joab departed and went througout all Israel, and came to Jerusalem.

And Joab gave the sum of the number of the people unto David. And all they of Israel were a thousand thousand and an hundred thousand men that drew sword: and Judah was four hundred threescore and ten thousand men that drew sword.

But Levi and Benjamin counted he not among them: for the king's word was abominable to Joab.

And God was displeased with this thing, therefore he smote Israel.

And David said unto God, I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing: but now, I beseech thee, do away the iniquity of thy servant, for I have done very foolishly.

And the LORD spake unto Gad, David's seer, saying,
Go

Go and tell David, saying, Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three things, choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee.

So Gad came to David, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Choose thee, either three years famine, or three months to be destroyed before thy foes (while that the sword of thy enemies overtaketh thee), or else three days the sword of the LORD, even the pestilence in the land; and the angel of the LORD destroying throughout all the coast of Israel: now therefore advise thyself, what word I shall bring again to him that sent me.

And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let me fall now into the hand of the LORD, (for very great are his mercies) but let me not fall into the hand of man.

So the LORD sent pestilence upon Israel: and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men.

And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it: and as he was destroying, the LORD beheld, and he repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough, stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD stood by the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

And David lift up his eyes, and saw the angel of the LORD stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem: then David and the elders of Israel, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces.

And David said unto God, Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed; but as for these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, O LORD my God, be on me, and on my father's house, but not on thy people, that they should be plagued.

Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say

to

to David , that David should go up and set up an altar unto the LORD, in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

And David went up at the saying of Gad, which he spake in the name of the LORD.

And Ornan turned back, and saw the angel; and his four sons with him hid themselves. Now Ornan was threshing wheat.

And as David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David, and went out of the threshing-floor, and bowed himself to David with his face to the ground.

Then David said to Ornan, Grant me the place of this threshing-floor, that I may build an altar therein unto the LORD; thou shalt grant it me for the full price, that the plague may be stayed from the people.

And Ornan said unto David, Take it to thee, and let my lord the king do that which is good in his eyes: lo I give thee the oxen also for burnt-offerings, and the threshing instruments for wood, and the wheat for the meat-offering, I give it all.

And king David said to Ornan, Nay, but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take that which is thine for the LORD, nor offer burnt-offerings without cost.

So David gave to Ornan for the place, six hundred shekels of gold by weight.

And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, and called upon the LORD, and he answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt-offering.

And the LORD commanded the angel, and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof.

At that time, when David saw that the LORD had answered him in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there.

For the tabernacle of the LORD which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of the burnt-offering, were at that season in the high place at Gibeon.

But David could not go before it to enquire of God, for he was afraid, because of the sword of the angel of the LORD.

Then David said, This is the house of the LORD God, and this is the altar of burnt-offering for Israel.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

This section contains a most melancholy relation, and great difficulties attend the explanation of it. The sin which David committed was a breach of the law of Moses*.

It is supposed, that, in the pride of his heart, David numbered the people, and that the Israelites *wilfully neglected* to pay the *tribute* which the LORD enjoyed as an acknowledgement that their lives, which were justly forfeited to him by their sins, were redeemed by his mercy. We may be sure they were guilty of *presumptuous* sin, and that David's conscience accused him of having committed it. I think we may likewise conclude, from the nature of the punishments proposed, that the Israelites were partakers in the offence; for pestilence, war, and famine, were appointed by the ALMIGHTY for the chastisement of *national sins*; and what can be more likely to awaken the consciences of a people, who are forgetful of their duty to God, than a sudden calamity, which sweeps off thousands in a day.

It is impossible to describe, or even to imagine, the horror of such a scene: and we have reason to pray, that such a dreadful judgment may never fall upon this land in our days; but, if the increasing impiety of the nation

* Exodus xxx. 11, and sequel.

should provoke the LORD to afflict us with pestilence, we may learn, from David's example, to humble ourselves before God, with sincere resolutions of obeying his holy will, and then we may hope to be preserved, as he was, through Divine mercy.

Then we need not be afraid for the terror by night ; nor for the arrow that flieth by day ; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness ; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon day : a thousand shall fall beside us, and ten thousand at our right hand, but it shall not come near us. We shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty, and He shall deliver us.*

It is a happy thing to reflect, that in all dangers, how great soever, those who are religious may confide in God for protection. In this world, good persons are safe under his *shadow*, as the psalmist expresses it ; but if it is the Divine pleasure to permit them to fall among sinners in a time of public calamity, it is but to remove them into the light of HIS GLORIOUS PRESENCE.

We find that Satan was the first instigator to David's crime ; but David was equally guilty in the sight of God as if it had proceeded originally from his own wicked inclination ; from whence we learn, that it is no excuse for sin, to say we are tempted, as the LORD will certainly enable every one to resist temptation who will seek for Divine assistance.

SECTION XXVIII.

DAVID MAKETH PREPARATIONS FOR BUILDING THE TEMPLE—INSTRUCTETH SOLOMON—CHARGETH THE PRINCES.

From 1 Chronicles, Chap. xxii.

AND David commanded to gather together the stran-

* Psalm xci.

gers that were in the land of Israel, and he set masons to hew wrought stones to build the house of God.

And David prepared iron in abundance for the nails for the doors of the gates, and for the joinings; and brass in abundance without weight: Also cedar-trees in abundance; for the Zidonians, and they of Tyre, brought much cedar-wood to David.

And David said, Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be builded for the LORD must be exceeding magnifical, of fame and of glory throughout all countries: I will therefore now make preparation for it. So David prepared abundantly before his death.

Then he called for Solomon his son, and charged him to build an house for the LORD GOD of Israel.

And David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God: but the word of the LORD came to me saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight.

Behold a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days.

He shall build an house for my name; and he shall be my son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever.

Now my son, the LORD be with thee; and prosper thou, and build the house of the LORD thy God, as he hath said of thee.

Only the LORD give thee wisdom and understanding, and give thee charge concerning Israel, that thou mayest keep the law of the LORD thy God.

Then

Then shalt thou prosper, if thou takest heed to fulfil the statutes and judgments which the LORD charged Moses with concerning Israel. Be strong and of good courage; dread not, nor be dismayed.

Now behold, in my trouble I have prepared for the house of the LORD an hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand thousand talents of silver: and of brass and iron without weight; for it is in abundance: timber also and stone have I prepared; and thou mayest add thereto.

Moreover, there are workmen with thee in abundance, hewers, and workers of stone and timber, and all manner of cunning men for every manner of work.

Of the gold, the silver, and the brass, and the iron there is no number. Arise therefore, and be doing, and the LORD be with thee.

David also commanded all the princes of Israel to help Solomon hisson, saying, Is not the LORD your God with you? and hath he not given you rest on every side? for he hath given the inhabitants of the land into mine hand; and the land is subdued before the LORD, and before his people.

Now set your heart and your soul to seek the LORD your God: arise therefore, and build ye the sanctuary of the LORD God, to bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and the holy vessels of God, into the house that is to be built to the name of the LORD.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We read in the last section, that David purchased the threshing-floor of Ornan for a considerable sum of money, and that he determined to build the Temple on that spot; he had received instructions from the LORD concerning the form of the Temple and its furniture,

by which means he was enabled to direct all the necessary preparations. We find that David had collected together immense treasures for this holy purpose. Gold and silver abounded in those days much more than at present, for many mines have been entirely exhausted. David had been victorious in above twenty battles with the richest enemies in the world, many of whom had shields of gold, their weapons were at least ornamented with that metal, and even their camels' necks were adorned with golden chains: they also carried idols of gold and silver with them; therefore we may easily conceive, that the personal spoils which he took from his enemies must have amounted to an incredible sum, and in all probability the spoils of their cities to a much greater.

Edom, the Arabias and Syrias on both sides of the Euphrates, and the Palestine coast (which countries abounded with mines) were tributary to David; consequently the tribute that was annually paid to him must have been immense. He likewise brought great wealth to his kingdom, by trading with other nations; for his country was well cultivated, the produce of the land of Israel being much more than sufficient for its inhabitants; neither could they consume all the commodities with which their numerous flocks and herds supplied them.

Since his conquest of Edom, David had another source of riches; for by reducing that country to a province, he became master of two sea-port towns on the Red Sea, Elath and Esion-geber; from whence he carried on, for twenty-five years before his death, a very profitable trade to Ophir and Tarshish, in the eastern part of the world; each of these places, among other valuable articles, furnished David with great quantities of gold and silver. So that it is easy to account for his possessing such amazing riches; and from the piety of his disposition we may conclude,

conclude, that he was desirous of employing them in such a manner as might shew to the world, that he acknowledged God as the *supreme* KING of Israel, and considered himself only as the captain and shepherd of the LORD's inheritance.

SECTION XXIX.

ADONIJAH CAUSETH HIMSELF TO BE PROCLAIMED KING.

SOLOMON, BY DAVID'S APPOINTMENT, IS ANOINTED.

From 1 Kings, Chap. i.

AND king David was old and stricken in years; then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, I will be king; and he prepared him chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him.

And his father had not displeased him at any time, in saying, Why hast thou done so? and he also was a very goodly man: and his mother bare him after Absalom.

And he conferred with Joab the son of Zeruiah, and with Abiathar the priest: and they following Adonijah, helped him.

But Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and Nathan the prophet, and Shimei, and Rei, and the mighty men which belonged to David, went not with Adonijah.

And Adonijah slew sheep and oxen and fat cattle, by the stone of Zoheleth, which is by En-rogel, and called his brethren the king's sons, and all the men of Judah the king's servants.

But Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah, and the mighty men, and Solomon his brother, he called not.

Wherefore Nathan spake unto Bath-sheba the mother

of Solomon, saying, Hast thou not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith doth reign, and David our lord knoweth it not? now therefore come, let me, I pray thee give thee counsel, that thou mayest save thine own life, and the life of thy son Solomon.

Go, and get thee in unto king David, and say unto him, Didst not thou, my lord, O king, swear unto thine handmaid, saying, Assuredly, Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne? why then doth Adonijah reign? Behold, while thou yet talkest there with the king, I will also come in after thee, and confirm thy words.

And Bath-sheba went in unto the king, in the chamber; and the king was very old.

And Bath-sheba bowed, and did obeisance unto the king: and the king said, What wouldest thou? And she said unto him, My lord, thou swarest by the LORD thy God unto thine handmaid, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne: And now behold, Adonijah reigneth; and now my lord the king, thou knowest it not.

And he hath slain oxen, and fat cattle, and sheep in abundance, and hath called all the sons of the king, and Abiathar the priest, and Joab the captain of the host; but Solomon thy servant hath he not called.

And thou, my lord, O king, the eyes of all Israel are upon thee, that thou shouldest tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him.

Otherwise it shall come to pass, when my lord the king shall sleep with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon shall be counted offenders.

And lo, while she yet talked with the king, Nathan the prophet also came in.

And they told the king, saying, Behold, Nathan the prophet.

prophet. And when he was come in before the king, he bowed himself before the king with his face to the ground.

And Nathan said, My lord, O king, hast thou said, Adonijah shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne? For he is gone down this day, and hath slain oxen, and fat cattle, and sheep in abundance, and hath called all the king's sons, and the captains of the host, and Abiathar the priest; and behold, they eat and drink before him, and say, God save king Adonijah.

But me, even me thy servant, and Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and thy servant Solomon, hath he not called.

Is this thing done by my lord the king, and thou hast not shewed it unto thy servant, who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?

Then king David answered and said, Call me Bath-seeba: and she came into the king's presence, and stood before the king.

And the king sware, and said, As the LORD liveth, that hath redeemed my soul out of all distress, even as I sware unto thee by the LORD God of Israel, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne in my stead; even so will I certainly do this day.

Then Bath-sheba bowed with her face to the earth, and did reverence to the king, and said, Let my lord king David live for ever.

And king David said, Call me Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada. And they came before the king.

The king also said unto them, Take you the servants of your lord, and cause Solomon my son to ride upon mine own mule, and bring him down to Gihon.

And let Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, anoint him there king over Israel: and blow ye with the trumpet, and say, God save king Solomon.

Then ye shall come up after him, that he may come and sit upon my throne; for he shall be king in my stead: and I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel, and over Judah.

And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada answered the king, and said, Amen: the LORD GOD of my lord the king say so too.

As the LORD hath been with my lord the king, even so be he with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord king David.

So Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, went down, and caused Solomon to ride upon king David's mule, and brought him to Gihon.

And Zadok the priest took an horn of oil out of the tabernacle, and anointed Solomon: and they blew the trumpet, and all the people said, God save king Solomon.

And all the people came up after him, and the people piped with pipes, and rejoiced with great joy, so that the earth rent with the sound of them.

And Adonijah and all the guests that were with him, heard it as they had made an end of eating: and when Joab heard the sound of the trumpet, he said, Wherefore is this noise of the city being in an uproar? And while he yet spake, behold, Jonathan the son of Abiathar the priest came, and Adonijah said unto him, Come in, for thou art a valiant man, and bringest good tidings.

And Jonathan answered and said to Adonijah, Verily our lord king David hath made Solomon king.

And the king hath sent with him Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada,
and

and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, and they have caused him to ride upon the king's mule.

And Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, anointed him king in Gihon: and they are come up from thence rejoicing, so that the city rang again: this is the noise that ye have heard.

And also Solomon sitteth on the throne of the kingdom.

And moreover, the king's servants came to bless our lord king David, saying, God make the name of Solomon better than thy name, and make his throne greater than thy throne: and the king bowed himself upon the bed.

And also thus said the king, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which hath given one to sit on my throne this day, mine eyes even seeing it.

And all the guests that were with Adonijah were afraid, and rose up, and went every man his way.

And Adonijah feared because of Solomon, and arose, and went, and caught hold on the horns of the altar.

And it was told Solomon, saying, Behold, Adonijah feareth king Solomon: for lo, he hath caught hold on the horns of the altar, saying, Let king Solomon swear unto me to day, that he will not slay his servant with the sword.

And Solomon said, If he will shew himself a worthy man, there shall not a hair of him fall to the earth: but if wickedness shall be found in him, he shall die.

So king Solomon sent, and they brought Adonijah down from the altar: and he came and bowed himself to king Solomon: and Solomon said unto him, Go to thine house.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Solomon was a much younger man than Adonijah, who after Absalom's death was the eldest, and therefore,

according to the usual custom of other nations, he was heir to the crown; but as God himself had been the *only* king of the Israelites till Samuel's days, so when at the people's desire the form of government was changed, the LORD still reserved to himself the right of nominating the successor when the throne became vacant, as we read in the law of Moses: *When *thou art come into the land, which the LORD thy GOD giveth thee, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, thou shalt by all means make him king whom the LORD shall chuse;* so that when God had declared his appointment of Solomon (as he did by the prophet Nathan) David was not at liberty to make choice of any other; but we may suppose that all his other sons were jealous of this preference given to a younger brother, which made them so ready to join with Adonijah.

At what time David swore to Bath-sheba that Solomon should sit on his throne is uncertain; but most likely, on Nathan's being sent to give Solomon a name, which denoted his being beloved of the LORD, David gave his mother a solemn promise, that since God had so manifestly declared in favour of this child, he would for his part do the utmost in his power to facilitate his succession.

All Adonijah's ambitious views were in an instant frustrated, and he found that it was in vain to oppose the will of the LORD, though he had prevailed on Joab the general of the forces, and Abiathar the high-priest, to espouse his cause. How it came to pass that they proceeded in such an important affair without the knowledge of David, is not related; but from the circumstance of David's giving Zadok the preference on a former occasion, we have reason to suppose, that Abiathar had been irregular in the administration of his office. As for Joab, he

* Deut. xvii. 14, 15.

frequently treated his sovereign with the utmost disrespect, therefore his conduct is the less to be wondered at.

Nathan, Zadok, and Benaiah, were known to Adonijah as true and faithful subjects to king David, and for that reason they were excluded from the general invitation; and we may be sure, if they had been invited, they would have refused to go; we must not then suppose that Nathan's displeasure towards Adonijah arose from this circumstance of neglect, but that he mentioned it as a proof to the king, that his fidelity, as well as that of Zadok and Benaiah, were too publicly known for any one to attempt perverting them; and to convince their good old monarch, that there were still some persons of consequence ready to maintain the right of him whom God had chosen.

Adonijah fled to the altar, supposing that veneration for that sacred place would prevent his being put to death; his scheme succeeded, and finding there was no other way of saving his life, he paid obeisance to his lawful sovereign, and withdrew his claim to the crown. It must doubtless have given great affliction to David in his latter days, to meet with such unkindness and ingratitude from a son, whom he had ever treated with the utmost degree of tenderness and indulgence; but he uttered no murmurs or complaints, for he saw the hand of the LORD still chastising him, in order that his penitence might continue to the last; and that the world might know, from his example, what evils the LORD suffers to fall upon those who commit such crimes as David was guilty of, and the behaviour which God requires from offenders against his holy laws.

SECTION XXX.

DAVID MAKETH PREPARATIONS FOR BUILDING THE
 TEMPLE—COMMANDETH SOLOMON TO BUILD IT—
 AND CHARGETH THE PRINCES TO ASSIST HIS SON.

From 1 Chron. Chap. xxviii, xxix.

AND David assembled all the princes of Israel, the princes of the tribes and the captains of the companies that ministered to the king by course, and the captains over the thousands, and captains over the hundreds, and the stewards over all the substance and possession of the king, and of his sons, with the officers, and with the mighty men, and with all the valiant men, unto Jerusalem.

Then David the king stood upon his feet, and said, Hear me, my brethren, and my people, As for me, I had in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and for the foot-stool of our God, and had made ready for the building; But God said unto me, Thou shalt not build an house for my name, because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood.

Howbeit the LORD God of Israel chose me before all the house of my father, to be king over Israel for ever. For he hath chosen Judah to be the ruler; and of the house of Judah, the house of my father, and among the sons of my father, he liked me to make me king over all Israel: And of all my sons, (for the LORD hath given me many sons,) he hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel.

And

And he said unto me, Solomon thy son, he shall build my house and my courts: for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father.

Moreover, I will establish his kingdom for ever, if he be constant to do my commandments and my judgments, as at this day.

Now therefore in the sight of all Israel the congregation of the LORD, and in the audience of our God, keep and seek for all the commandments of the LORD your God: that ye may possess this good land, and leave it for an inheritance for your children after you for ever.

And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind. For the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.

Take heed now: for the LORD hath chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary: be strong, and do it.

Then David gave to Solomon his son, the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit of the LORD. And he gave of gold by weight, and of silver also by weight, for all instruments of every kind of service.

All this, said David, the LORD made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern.

And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed, for the LORD God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD.

And behold, the courses of the priests and the Levites, even they shall be with thee for all the service of the

house of God: and there shall be with thee for all manner of workmanship, every willing skilful man, for any manner of service: also the princes and all the people will be wholly at thy commandment.

Furthermore David the king said unto all the congregation, Solomon my son, whom alone God hath chosen, is yet young and tender, and the work is great; for the palace is not for man, but for the Lord God.

Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God, the gold for things to be made of gold, and the silver for things of silver, and the brass for things of brass, the iron for things of iron, and wood for things of wood: onyx-stones, and stones to be set, glistening stones, and of divers colours, and all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance.

Moreover, because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have of mine own proper good, of gold and silver, which I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house.

Even three thousand talents of gold of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver to overlay the walls of the houses withal: The gold for things of gold, and the silver for things of silver, and for all manner of work to be made by the hands of artificers. And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?

Then the chief of the fathers and princes of the tribes of Israel, and the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the rulers over the king's work offered willingly.

And gave for the service of the house of God, of gold, five thousand talents and ten thousand drams: and of silver, ten thousand talents; and of brass, eighteen thousand

thousand talents: and one hundred thousand talents of iron.

And they with whom precious stones were found, gave them to the treasure of the house of the LORD, by the hand of Jehiel the Gershonite.

Then the people rejoiced for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the LORD: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy.

Wherefore David blessed the LORD before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed be thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever.

Thine, O LORD is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all.

Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all.

Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name.

But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.

For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers; our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding.

O LORD our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thine holy name, cometh of thine hand, and all is thine own.

I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness

ness

ness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy thy people which are present here to offer willingly unto thee.

O LORD GOD of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee: and give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart to keep thy commandments, thy testimonies, and thy statutes, and to do all these things, and to build the palace for the which I have made provision.

And David said to all the congregation, Now bless the LORD your GOD. And all the congregation blessed the LORD GOD of heir fathers, and bowed down their heads, and worshipped the LORD, and did homage to the king.

And they sacrificed sacrifices unto the LORD and offered burnt-offerings unto the LORD on the morrow after that day, even a thousand bullocks, a thousand rams, and a thousand lambs, with their drink offerings, and sacrifices in abundance for all Israel: And did eat and drink before the LORD on that day with great gladness. And they made Solomon the son of David king the second time, and anointed him unto the LORD to be the chief governor, and Zadok to be priest.

Then Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD as king instead of David his father, and prospered, and all Israel obeyed him.

And all the princes, and the mighty men, and all the sons likewise of king David submitted themselves unto Solomon the king.

And the LORD magnified Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed upon him such royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel.

ANNO-

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

At the time Adonijah attempted to seize the throne, David was confined to his bed with excessive weakness; but it seems he recovered sufficient strength to be present at a solemn assembly which was called together in order to establish Solomon's pretensions. How admirable were the humility and piety of David on this occasion, and how earnest his desire to promote the glory of God! To remove all jealousy from the minds of his other sons, and prevent dissensions amongst his subjects, David publicly declared, that God *himself* had appointed Solomon *to sit upon the throne of the KINGDOM of the LORD over Israel*.

The princes, convinced that all which David said and did at this time was agreeable to the Divine will, gladly followed his royal example*, in devoting part of their riches to the glory of God; and after having offered their sacrifices, they feasted on them with great joy before the LORD. The sentiments of David's heart on this joyful occasion, may be learnt from that excellent thanksgiving, which he then uttered. It is supposed that after he had blessed the people, he offered up the following prayer for Solomon†.

Give the king Thy judgments, O God, and Thy righteousness unto the king's son.

He shall judge Thy people with righteousness, and Thy poor with judgment.

The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the hills, by righteousness.

* The value of the gold (besides the seven thousand talents of silver) which David gave out of his own private estate, amounted to the sum of 21,000,000*l.* of our money, which might easily be amassed by repeated voyages to Ophir and Tarshish.

† Psalm, lxxii.

He

He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.

They shall fear Thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations.

He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth.

In his days shall the righteous flourish: and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.

He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.

They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him: and his enemies shall lick the dust.

The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.

Yea, all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him.

For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth: the poor also, and him that hath no helper.

He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy.

He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight.

And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba; prayer also shall be made for him continually, and daily shall he be praised.

There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains, the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon, and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.

His name shall endure for ever: His name shall be continued as long as the sun, and men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed.

Blessed be the LORD GOD, the GOD of Israel, who only doth wondrous things.

And

And Blessed be His glorious name for ever, and let the whole earth be filled with glory; Amen, and amen.

The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.

It appears, from the beginning of this psalm, that David's intention was to pray for blessings on his son Solomon; but before he could proceed to express all that he wished concerning the glory of Solomon's reign, he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to describe, in a prophetic manner, that of the Messiah's kingdom. This prophecy was calculated to furnish instruction to Solomon, by setting before him such rules as might serve for a guide to him in the character of viceroy of that great Being, whose temporal kingdom he was appointed to govern: and it will appear, from the course of this history, that Solomon was happy in proportion to his observation of these rules, and wretched and inglorious when he deviated from them.

SECTION XXXI.

**DAVID GIVETH A CHARGE TO SOLOMON HIS SON,
AND DIETH.**

1 Kings, Chap. ii. 1 Chron. Chap. xxix.

Now the days of David drew nigh, that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying, I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man.

And keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself: that the LORD may continue his word which he spake
concerning

concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth, with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel.

Moreover, thou knowest also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, and what he did to the two captains of the host of Israel, unto Abner the son of Ner and unto Amasa the son of Jether, whom he slew, and shed the blood of war in peace, and put the blood of war upon his girdle that was about his loins, and in his shoes that were on his feet.

Do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace.

But shew kindness unto the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be of those that eat at thy table: for so they came to me when I fled because of Absalom thy brother.

And behold, thou hast with thee Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite of Bahurim, which cursed me with a grievous curse, in the day when I went to Mahanaim: but he came down to meet me at Jordan, and I swore to him by the LORD, saying, I will not put thee to death with the sword.

Now therefore hold him not guiltless: for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him; but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood.

So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David.

And the time that he reigned over Israel was forty years; seven years reigned he in Hebron, and thirty and three years reigned he in Jerusalem.

And he died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honour. And Solomon his son reigned in his stead.

ANNO-

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

As David was sensible that his last hours drew nigh, he called for his son Solomon, that he might with his dying lips enforce the admonitions he had formerly given him concerning obedience to the LORD; and likewise instruct him in some particulars, necessary to secure his peaceable possession of the throne.

Joab was a man of a very turbulent spirit, who had on several occasions resisted David's authority, and he had lately joined in a conspiracy against Solomon; it was therefore likely, that he would give the young king much trouble, and Solomon perhaps might be induced to spare him on account of his venerable years, and the high rank he had long borne in the army; David therefore exhorted Solomon to act towards him *as wisdom should direct*; and reminded his son of the former crimes Joab had committed, how frequently he had opposed the lawful commands of his sovereign, and how treacherously he had murdered Abner and Amasa.

From David's own words when Joab murdered Abner, we may conclude, that he certainly would have called him to his trial immediately: but he feared that by attempting it, he might occasion more bloodshed amongst his subjects, as Joab had great influence in the army; neither was the king in a situation to admit of his taking vengeance for the death of Amasa, as he was at that time but just returned to the royal city, and the kingdom in the utmost confusion.

David's general behaviour to his enemies gives us reason to suppose, that for every *private* injury he would readily have forgiven Joab; but as KING of Israel, he *could not* pardon him without being guilty of a breach of GOD's commands himself; for the law was very strong
against

against wilful murder, and admitted of no atonement for it by sacrifices and prayers. Supposing that the anger of God could be appeased by humiliation, it is impossible to make restitution to the dead; for this reason the LORD commanded, that he who killed another should forfeit his own life. Besides, "*in the image of God made he man;*" it is therefore *impious* for any one to destroy that *body* in which the CREATOR has placed an *immortal* SOUL, since the Supreme Being alone has a right to dispense life and death. Besides, the land of Israel was peculiarly sanctified by the *visible manifestation* of the PRESENCE of God, who had said (by the mouth of Moses) "*Ye shall not pollute the land wherein I dwell, for blood defileth the land, which cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it. Defile not therefore the land wherein I dwell, for I the LORD dwell amongst the children of Israel.*" So that the king of Israel who suffered a wilful murderer to live, endangered the bringing a curse upon his kingdom, and was answerable in a great measure for any subsequent murders the offender might commit. The Israelites it is true slew a great number in *war*, but they were persons who had themselves *defaced the image of God* by their abominable practices, and had forfeited their lives by their crimes; in respect to these, therefore the Israelites were but the instruments of Divine justice, and acted by God's express command. And so did those who put to death such as were guilty of capital offences; for God had ordained the punishment, and it was the duty of the magistrate to put it in execution. It was for the sake of *public justice*, and not to gratify *private resentment*, that David advised Solomon "*not to let Joab's hear hear go down to the grave in peace.*"

Some

Some learned authors * are of opinion, that the text relating to Shimei is not properly translated, and that it should have been rendered, "*Now therefore hold him not guiltless, (for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him) NOR his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood.*" If this is the right interpretation of the passage, (which Solomon's treatment of Shimei confirms) then we may understand, that David only intended to caution his son to keep a strict eye upon Shimei, as his loyalty was by no means to be depended on; neither was it consistent with wisdom and policy to permit such a seditious person to enjoy the same privileges in every respect, as his faithful subjects did.

When David had given all requisite instructions to Solomon, his business on earth was finished; and as the faculties of his mind were unimpaired, there is no doubt but he passed his last moments in pious meditations.

David† had set the LORD always before him, therefore (even in this tremendous hour) his heart was glad and *his glory (or immortal Spirit)* rejoiced; for he firmly trusted that it would not be left *for ever* in the place of the dead, but that even his *body* should *rise again*; and that God would *redeem* his SOUL from the power of the grave, and not suffer him, who had been sanctified by the inspiration of the *holy Spirit*, to see corruption; but would shew him the path of life which leadeth to the presence of God, where is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore!

* Chandler's and Delany's Life of David.

† See Psalm xvi. 8, &c. and xlix. 15.

SECTION XXXII.

A RETROSPECTIVE VIEW OF THE CHARACTER OF KING
DAVID, THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART.

WE have now gone entirely through the history of king David, which affords great delight and instruction: he certainly was one of the best men that ever lived upon earth, and none of the boasted heroes* of antiquity are worthy to stand in any degree of competition with him, either for courage or virtues; and yet we often hear among those who call themselves *learned* and *polite*, the character of this king vilified in the most opprobrious terms, because he is styled in Scripture, the *man after God's own heart*, though he was guilty of great violations of the *moral law*; it is therefore necessary to explain, how we are to understand this expression.

A short time after Saul was made king, he broke through the conditions on which he had been raised to sit on the throne of the LORD over Israel, and arrogated to himself the supreme power, instead of acting as God's vicegerent, and for this cause, the prophet Samuel was sent to tell him, that he was rejected as captain of the LORD's inheritance, and that his kingdom should not descend to his posterity, for the LORD had sought him a man after his own heart; that is, one who would never forget that he received his authority from the LORD, and was bound to govern agreeably to God's commands. David when a humble shepherd, was remarkable for his piety and amiable disposition, and he justified the preference which was given to him at that time.

We are told, that immediately after he was anointed

* See in Dr. Delany's Life of David, a parallel between this king and the heroes of profane history.

captain of the LORD's inheritance, and had the promise of the kingdom given to him, the *Spirit* of the LORD came on him, and we read of his performing many acts that required supernatural assistance: all the successes which the Israelites had against the Philistines during the remainder of Saul's reign, were under David; from which Saul was led to suspect, that he would also supersede him in the throne; till at last his jealousy was so inveterate, that he resolved, if possible, to destroy him: David, however, was protected by an Almighty arm, for (notwithstanding it must be acknowledged that he committed many errors, which shew that he was subject to human imperfection (he preserved the highest reverence for GOD, and zeal for the honour of religion, and on this account was delivered from the most imminent dangers by the interposition of DIVINE PROVIDENCE, being still in the general tenor of his conduct, *a man after GOD's own heart*. When he gave way to the *impetuosity of passion*, he was always *unfortunate*, but adversity had its proper effect on his mind; he prayed for pardon, and the *Spirit* of the LORD again assisted him: at length, after a variety of trials, he was anointed king over all Israel; at which time he entered into a covenant, that he would consider the people as sheep committed to his care by the LORD, would provide for their safety and rule them with tenderness; and, as *captain of the LORD's inheritance*, would help them to subdue their enemies: we may also collect from many of his Psalms, that the LORD had made a *covenant* with David, and assured him by his *holy Spirit* that if he continued faithful to the trust reposed in him, he could establish his kingdom *for ever*; and that if his posterity were obedient to the LORD, they should reign after him, in regular succession, till a prince should be born of David's race, that should rule over all the kingdoms of the earth. David

understood

understood this promise as relating ultimately to the MESSIAH, and, though many years were to pass away before our Saviour appeared on earth, he acknowledged him to be HIS LORD which proves that he had *perfect faith* in God.

As soon as David was settled on the throne, his great study was to shew forth the GLORY of God, and to promote the prosperity of Israel; for these purposes, he established public worship, restored the law of Moses, and made most excellent regulations in the government. He subdued all the idolatrous nations that professed enmity to the LORD JEHOVAH, and always imputed his success to God. During the whole of his reign, David governed his people with the utmost clemency and justice, and was beloved and honoured by them to the end of his life; and his history abounds with instances of his generosity, benevolence, mildness, and magnanimity. In respect to Uriah, David certainly was a great offender against the *moral law*, and by that law *his life was forfeited*; however, in consideration of his exemplary *penitence* and his *general fidelity*, it pleased God to pardon him; but that no one might be encouraged to suppose such *wicked actions were excusable*, David was condemned to suffer such afflictions *as should deter others from committing the same crimes*, and we may judge, from the consolations he received by the *Holy Spirit*, that his behaviour under these chastisements was such as became *the man after God's own heart*. As soon as the end for which the punishment was inflicted on him was answered he was once more restored to peace, and admitted to the holy Tabernacle: where he poured forth his soul in thankful acknowledgments of the goodness of the LORD, and promises of future obedience.

When David found his latter end approaching, he made known to his people that Solomon was appointed

to

to succeed him in the throne, caused him to be anointed in his life time, acquainted him with the *covenant of the LORD*, and exhorted him to observe the conditions of it.

Whilst we are endeavouring to obtain a just idea of the character of David, we must not omit to mention his collection of Psalms, a treasury of Divine instruction, of inestimable value, which, as long as the world lasts, must be held in the highest estimation by pious persons; for these divine hymns are so adapted to the common occasions of life, that every one, from the highest monarch to the meanest slave, may appropriate them to his use: they teach us not only *how* God must be worshipped, but furnish us also with the means of doing it in the most acceptable manner: the afflicted may pray, the sinner express contrition, and the happy rejoice before the LORD, in the very words of David; national calamities may be deplored, and national mercies acknowledged by these divine compositions: the harmonious concert may be sanctified by such heavenly strains, and the artless notes of the humblest christian, dignified by the poetry of the *sweet singer of Israel*. Many of the Psalms begin with prayer or praise, and end with assurances to the humble and penitent, that the LORD will preserve and protect all those who trust in Him. In such passages, we may clearly discern the marks of *Divine inspiration*; and they were certainly dictated by the *holy Spirit*, for the consolation, not only of David, but of every one else who will avail himself of this Divine bounty; and even the *curses* which David, in the character of king of Israel, denounced against the idolatrous nations may serve as *admonitions* to us, since they point out the crimes for which those sinners were destroyed: let us then *examine our hearts by them*, and if we find in them any inclination to commit such sins as are therein deprecated,

let us make haste to repent, lest the LORD cast *us* out also for rebellion against him : but we must be careful *not to apply these curses to such as have injured us*, for no christian can be in the same situation David was when he penned them ; and besides, we have an express command, *to love our enemies ; to bless, and curse not.*

From David's history we may learn, that *a man after GOD's own heart*, is one who makes the Divine will the general rule of his life ; who has a fervent zeal for the honour of GOD, and a benevolent regard to the happiness of mankind ; who is patient in adversity, humble in prosperity ; who examines his own heart, to see if there is any way of wickedness in him ; acknowledges his sins with shame and repentance, and avoids the repetition of them ; who aspires after that *perfection of goodness*, which human nature in its present state cannot attain to : and who trusts to the infinite mercy of GOD for pardon, esteeming the *divine favour* as the highest blessing he can enjoy, and longing to be admitted to those blissful regions, where, freed from his present passions and temptations, he may render more acceptable service to the greatest and best of Beings.

The LORD vindicated his own honour by shewing displeasure against David for his crimes, and caused the history of this king to be written in the scriptures for the edification of the world ; if we turn it into ridicule, we *despise the admonitions of the LORD* ; and if we *harden ourselves in sin*, instead of *amending our lives* by David's example, and *reproach* GOD for calling him, *the man after his own heart*, we *blaspheme his HOLY NAME* ; therefore let us never join in such profane conversation, as it will prove that we are neither well grounded in religion, nor acquainted with sacred history, and that we want to find pretences for continuing in wickedness.

SECTION

SECTION XXXIII.

SOLOMON REIGNETH—ADONIJAH PUT TO DEATH.

From 1 Kings, Chap. ii.

THEN sat Solomon upon the throne of David his father, and his kingdom was established greatly.

And Adonijah the son of Haggith came to Bath-sheba, the mother of Solomon, and she said, Comest thou peaceably? And he said, Peaceably.

He said moreover, I have something to say unto thee. And she said, Say on.

And he said, Thou knowest that the kingdom was mine, and that all Israel set their faces on me, that I should reign; howbeit the kingdom is turned about, and is become my brother's: for it was his from the LORD.

And now I ask one petition of thee, deny me not. And she said unto him, Say on.

And he said, Speak, I pray thee, unto Solomon the king (for he will not say thee nay) that he give me Abishag the Shunamite to wife.

Bath-sheba therefore went unto king Solomon, to speak unto him for Adonijah: and the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king's mother, and she sat on his right hand.

Then she said, I desire one small petition of thee, I pray thee say me not nay. And the king said unto her, Ask on, my mother, for I will not say thee nay.

And she said, Let Abishag the Shunamite be given to Adonijah thy brother to wife.

And king Solomon answered and said unto his mother, And why dost thou ask Abishag the Shunamite for

7 Adonijah? ask for him the kingdom also; (for he is mine elder brother;) even for him, and for Abiathar the priest, and for Joab the son of Zeruiah.

Then king Solomon swore by the LORD, saying, God do so to me, and more also, if Adonijah have not spoken this word against his own life.

Now therefore, as the LORD liveth, which hath established me, and set me on the throne of David my father, and who hath made me an house, as he promised, Adonijah shall be put to death this day.

And king Solomon sent by the hand of Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and he fell upon him that he died.

And unto Abiathar the priest said the king, Get thee to Anathoth, unto thine own fields, for thou art worthy of death: but I will not at this time put thee to death, because thou barest the ark of the LORD God before David my father, and because thou hast been afflicted in all wherein my father was afflicted.

So Solomon thrust out Abiathar from being priest unto the LORD; that he might fulfil the word of the LORD, which he spake concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh.

Then tidings came to Joab, (for Joab had turned after Adonijah, though he turned not after Absalom) and Joab fled unto the tabernacle of the LORD, and caught hold on the horns of the altar.

And it was told king Solomon that Joab was fled unto the tabernacle of the LORD, and behold he is by the altar: then Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, saying, Go fall upon him.

And Benaiah came to the tabernacle of the LORD, and said unto him, Thus saith the king, Come forth. And he said, Nay, but I will die here. And Benaiah brought the king word again, saying, Thus said Joab, and thus he answered me.

And

And the king said unto him, Do as he hath said, and fall upon him, and bury him; that thou mayest take away the innocent blood which Joab shed from me, and from the house of my father.

And the LORD shall return his blood upon his own head, who fell upon two men more righteous and better than he, and slew them with the sword, my father David not knowing thereof, to wit, Abner the son of Ner, captain of the host of Israel, and Amasa the son of Jether, captain of the host of Judah.

Their blood shall therefore return upon the head of Joab, and upon the head of his seed for ever: but upon David, and upon his seed, and upon his house, and upon his throne, shall there be peace for ever from the LORD.

So Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up, and fell upon him, and slew him; and he was buried in his own house in the wilderness.

And the king put Benaiah the son of Jehoiada in his room over the host; and Zadok the priest did the king put in the room of Abiathar.

And the king sent and called for Shimei, and said unto him, Build thee an house in Jerusalem, and dwell there, and go not forth thence any whither.

For it shall be, that on the day thou goest out, and passest over the brook Kidron, thou shalt know for certain, that thou shalt surely die: thy blood shall be upon thine own head.

And Shimei said unto the king, The saying is good: as my lord the king hath said, so will thy servant do. And Shimei dwelt in Jerusalem many days.

And it came to pass at the end of three years, that two of the servants of Shimei ran away unto Achish the son of Maacah king of Gath: and they told Shimei, saying, Behold thy servants be in Gath.

And Shimei arose and saddled his ass, and went to Gath to Achish to seek his servants: and Shimei went and brought his servants from Gath.

And it was told Solomon that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath, and was come again.

And the king sent and called for Shimei, and said unto him, Did I not make thee swear by the LORD, and protested unto thee, saying, Know for a certain, that on the day thou goest out, and walkest abroad any whither, that thou shalt surely die? and thou saidst unto me, The word that I have heard, is good.

Why then hast thou not kept the oath of the LORD, and the commandment that I have charged thee with? The king said moreover to Shimei, Thou knowest all the wickedness which thine heart is privy to, that thou didst to David my father: therefore the LORD shall return thy wickedness upon thine own head: and king Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the LORD for ever.

So the king commanded Benaiah the son of Jehoiada which went out and fell upon him, that he died; and the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

No sooner was Solomon seated on the throne, than Adonijah began to renew his scheme of dispossessing him; and with this view he desired to have Abishag, who had formerly been one of David's wives. Solomon promised him, when he fled to the altar on a former occasion, *“that if he would shew himself a worthy man, he should remain in safety: but that, if there was any way of wickedness in him, he should surely die:”* therefore Solomon was fully justified in causing him to be put to death, since *the welfare of the public* required it; and it was
Solomon's

Solomon's duty to put the law of God *exactly* in execution against *all* offenders, without having respect to affinity of blood; because he sat in the throne of the LORD JEHOVAH over *Israel*, and was not at *liberty* to consult his *own inclinations* in respect to the punishment of those who wished to dispossess the LORD's *vicegerent*.

As for Joab, he soon gave proofs of his disloyalty, and furnished Solomon with a fair pretence for condemning him to death for treasonable practices; but it seems, that he had before resolved to punish him for the murders of Abner and Amasa. Whoever recollects the cruel circumstances with which Joab perpetrated those crimes, must own, that it would have been a great encouragement to wickedness, if the *grey hairs* of such a notorious sinner had been suffered *to go down to the grave in peace*.

Abiathar, as high priest, should have devoted himself entirely to the service of God, instead of co-operating with those who were endeavouring to supersede the king, who was appointed of the LORD; therefore he was unworthy to fill that holy office; but, in reverence to the LORD, whose minister he was, though unworthy of that high honour, Solomon forbore to put him to death. Abiathar was the last priest of the house of Eli. Zadok was a descendant of Eliazar. We must not suppose that there were *two* high priests in the time of David, contrary to the original institution, though Zadok and Abiathar are sometimes mentioned together; but probably on account of the ark being in one place, and the brazen altar for burnt sacrifices at another, the high-priest had an assistant. Abiathar seems to have had the pre-eminence till the latter end of David's reign, when he was rejected for opposing God's will in respect to Solomon's succession to the crown; and Zadok was *anointed*, but did not take the office upon him, till Solomon divested Abiathar of it.

By the reverence which Solomon shewed to his mother, we may conclude, that he would have complied with her request, if it had been lawful for him to do so : but Bath-sheba had never considered the consequences of it ; she therefore, we may conclude, readily absolved her son from his promise, when she was taught to see Adonijah's petition in a proper light.

Achish, the king of Gath, had been so great a friend to David, that thought David had conquered the Philistines, he suffered him still to retain the title of a king, and only made him tributary ; so that there was a friendly correspondence between his city and Jerusalem, by which means Shimei might easily hear that his servants were there ; but he should have sent another to seek them ; and he certainly drew his punishment upon his own head, because he was forewarned of the consequences of his presuming to go out of Jerusalem, and by doing so he gave reason to suspect that he had seditious purposes in view.

What is supposed to be the true interpretation of David's dying injunction respecting Shimei, has been already explained : and we find that Solomon, who was the *wisest of men*, put the same construction on his father's words. His treatment to Shimei furnishes us with a sufficient answer to those who censure David on this head*.

SECTION

* I have hitherto avoided the discussion of Bath-sheba's character, for the same reasons which deterred me from entering into every particular of David's conduct in respect to Uriah ; but it may be necessary to observe that it appears from Solomon's respectful treatment of her, and from some expressions in the Proverbs, that she was in her general behaviour an amiable woman, not that this justifies her crime. She certainly was a partaker in David's sin ; and, we may conclude, a partner also in his sorrow, remorse, and chastisement.

It is a needless question to enquire, why David was not commanded

SECTION XXXIV.

SOLOMON'S SACRIFICES AT GIBEON—HIS DREAM.

From 2 Chron. Chap. i. and 1 Kings, Chap. iii.

AND Solomon the son of David was strengthened in his kingdom, and the LORD his God was with him, and magnified him exceedingly.

And Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father: only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places.

Then Solomon spake unto all Israel, to the captains of thousands and of hundreds, and to the judges, and to every governor in all Israel, the chief of the fathers.

So Solomon and all the congregation with him went to the high place that was at Gibeon: for there was the tabernacle of the congregation of God, which Moses the servant of the LORD had made in the wilderness.

But the ark of God had David brought up from Kirjath-jearim to the place which David had prepared for it: for he had pitched a tent for it at Jerusalem.

Moreover, the brazen altar that Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, had made, he put before the tabernacle of the LORD: and Solomon and the congregation sought unto it.

to put her away, since we have in the New Testament clear and express laws in respect to adulterers; and therefore have no occasion to refer to David's history in this particular: if we do, it should be with a view to observe the unhappy consequences of his deviations from the marriage law, instituted at the creation. The custom of the age authorised in some degree a plurality of wives; but whoever considers the tenderness of David's disposition, and his particular fondness for his sons, may conceive that he would have enjoyed more domestic happiness had they been all the children of one mother.

In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee.

And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee, and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on the throne, as it is this day.

And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but as a little child: I know not how to go out or come in.

And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude.

Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart, to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? And the speech pleased the LORD, that Solomon had asked this thing.

And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life, neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies, but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment: Behold I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart, so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee.

And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days.

And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days.

And Solomon awoke, and behold, it was a dream:
and

and he came to Jerusalem, and stood before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and offered up a thousand burnt-offerings, and offered peace-offerings, and made a feast to all his servants.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Notwithstanding David had taken such extraordinary pains to establish the public worship of God at JERUSALEM, it still remained irregular in some instances; particularly in respect to *sacrificing on HIGH PLACES*, which custom was practised by Abraham and the rest of the patriarchs through necessity, as the wandering lives they led would not admit of a settled place. Therefore every *high hill* and every *grove*, where these faithful servants assembled their families, in order to perform their devotions to ALMIGHTY God, was sanctified by HIS acceptance of their offerings, and became, in the general sense of the word, the HOUSE of God to them. As soon as the ARK was deposited in the Tabernacle, and holy ordinances were appointed of the LORD, it became unlawful for the Israelites to offer burnt-sacrifices at any other place but the BRAZEAULTAR; and that the people might have an opportunity of resorting to it on proper occasions, the Tabernacle, with the Ark, and all the appurtenances of holy worship, were carried about and set up, wherever the children of Israel rested during their journeyings towards the land of Canaan, till at length it was fixed at SHILOH.

We have read, how greatly this sinful people *corrupted* the worship of God, by mixing with *idolatrous nations*; and we know, that when the goodness of God recalled them to a sense of their duty by chastisements, they soon drew his anger upon them again by fresh provocations, so that the DIVINE PRESENCE did not constantly abide

with them; for the ARK was neglected, and few thought or desired to have recourse to it; but instead of that, many who professed to adore the true God, worshipped him according to the customs and rites which other nations practised toward idols.

The Israelites had preserved the Tabernacle, with the identical Brazen Altar, &c. made according to the directions of Moses, by Bezaleel, and fixed it at Gibeon, where the sons of Eli had brought it into disrepute, by their abominable profanations; and made the people suppose, that their sacrifices might be more efficacious, if offered on altars erected where their forefather had sacrificed. Numbers however still resorted to the *Holy Altar*; but the service was incomplete, as the Ark was separated from it; and even the prophet Samuel, in compliance with the custom of the times, offered sacrifices on HIGH PLACES.

It has been related, with what solemnity David conducted the Ark to Jerusalem; and there is no doubt but that it was his intention to remove the *Tabernacle* also, had he been permitted to execute his purpose of building a *Temple*; but as he was commanded to consign that work to his son, David contented himself with giving directions concerning every particular to Solomon, who continued to follow the usual mode of worship, till such time as the *House of the Lord* should be built. We find however that he went to GIBEON, in order to add all possible solemnity to his GREAT sacrifice. It is supposed, from the number of oxen, &c. which Solomon is said to have offered at Gibeon, that he extended the festival; and instead of keeping it seven days, as the law required, continued sacrificing every day, till he had offered the number of victims related.

It is very probable, that during this solemnity Solomon made

made the following excellent reflections, which are preserved in the Apocryphal Book, called the Book of WISDOM*.

Wisdom reacheth from one end to another mightily: and sweetly doth she order all things.

In that she is conversant with GOD, she magnifieth her nobility: yea, the LORD of all things Himself loved her.

For she is privy to the mysteries of the knowledge of GOD, and a lover of His works.

If riches be a possession to be desired in this life: what is richer than wisdom that worketh all things?

And if prudence work, who of all that are, is a more cunning workman than she?

And if a man love righteousness, her labours are virtues for she teacheth temperance and prudence, justice and fortitude, which are such things as men can have nothing more profitable in their life.

If a man desire much experience, she knoweth things of old, and conjectureth aright what is to come: she knoweth the subtilties of speeches, and can expound dark sentences: she foreseeth signs and wonders, and the events of seasons and times.

Therefore I purpose to take her to live with me, knowing that she will be a counsellor of good things, and a comfort in cares and grief.

For her sake I shall have estimation among the multitude, and honour with the elders, though I be young.

I shall be found of a quick conceit in judgment, and shall be admired in the sight of great men.

When I hold my tongue they shall bide my leisure; and when I speak they shall give good ear unto me: if I talk much, they shall lay their hands upon their mouth.

* Wisdom of Solomon, viii. ix.

Moreover, by the means of her, I shall obtain immortality, and leave behind me an everlasting memorial to them that come after me.

I shall set the people in order, and the nations shall be subject unto me.

Horrible tyrants shall be afraid when they do but hear of me; I shall be found good among the multitude, and valiant in war.

After I am come into mine house, I will repose myself with her: for her conversation hath no bitterness: and to live with her, hath no sorrow, but mirth and joy.

Now when I considered these things in myself, and pondered them in mine heart, how that to be allied unto wisdom, is immortality.

And great pleasure it is to have her friendship; and in the works of her hands are infinite riches, and in the exercise of conference with her, prudence; and in talking with her, a good report: I went about seeking how to take her to me.

Nevertheless, when I perceived that I could not otherwise obtain her, except GOD gave her me, (and that was a point of wisdom also to know whose gift she was) I prayed unto the LORD, and besought him, and with my whole heart I said:

O GOD of my fathers, and LORD of mercy, who hast made all things with thy word,

And ordained man through thy wisdom, that he should have dominion over the creatures which thou hast made,

And order the world according to equity and righteousness, and execute judgment with an upright heart.

Give me wisdom that sitteth by Thy throne, and reject me not from among Thy children:

For I Thy servant and son of Thine handmaid, am a feeble person, and of a short time, and too young for the understanding of judgment and laws.

For though a man be never so perfect among the children
of

of men ; yet if Thy wisdom be not with him, he shall be nothing regarded.

Thou hast chosen me to be a king of thy people, and a judge of Thy sons and daughters :

Thou hast commanded me to build a temple upon Thy holy mount, and an altar in the city wherein Thou dwellest, a resemblance of the holy tabernacle which Thou hast prepared from the beginning.

And wisdom was with Thee : which knoweth Thy works, and was present when Thou madest the world, and knew what was acceptable in Thy sight, and right in Thy commandments.

O send her out of Thy holy heavens, and from the throne of Thy glory, that being present she may labour with me, that I may know what is pleasing unto Thee.

For she knoweth and understandeth all things, and she shall lead me soberly in my doings, and preserve me in her power.

So shall my works be acceptable, and then shall I judge Thy people righteously, and be worthy to sit in my father's seat.

For what man is he that can know the counsel of GOD ? or who can think what the will of the LORD is ?

For the thoughts of mortal men are miserable, and our devices are but uncertain.

For the corruptible body presseth down the soul, and the earthly tabernacle weigheth down the mind that museth upon many things.

And hardly do we guess aright at things that are upon earth, and with labour do we find the things that are before us : but the things that are in heaven who hath searched out ?

And Thy counsel who hath known, except Thou give wisdom, and send Thy holy Spirit from above ?

For so the ways of them which lived on the earth were reformed ; and men were taught the things that are pleasing unto Thee, and were saved through wisdom.

Such we may reasonably conclude were Solomon's meditations, and such was his prayer, when he retired to rest at Gibeon; and as his prayer was perfectly consistent with the Divine will, it pleased the LORD *to keep the faculties of his UNDERSTANDING awake* by a miraculous power after his SENSES were in respect to worldly affairs locked up in sleep; by which means Solomon retained the IDEAS that had before occupied his mind, and continued his devotions in the manner related in the scripture part of this section (which is exactly to the same effect), on which it pleased the ALMIGHTY *to appear to him*. When Solomon awaked, he was satisfied in respect to the reality of this vision which must have been very different from a common dream; nor could he possibly mistake it, for, without doubt, those appearances by which GOD manifested his DIVINE PRESENCE, were very different from any thing that the creation furnishes to our view, or the most lively imagination can conceive. We read indeed of GOD's appearing in *fire*, in a *cloud*, in the *human form*, &c. but we find that the DEITY was always displayed by some circumstance which served to distinguish the CREATOR from the *creature*.

Solomon was farther convinced by the enlargement of his capacity, that the LORD had granted the desire of his heart; for he was not only endued with abilities to discharge the duties of his exalted station, but with astonishing knowledge of the whole circle of human arts and sciences*; and as a farther reward for his proper request, and encouragement to him to keep in the path of WISDOM, the LORD vouchsafed to renew the covenant He had formerly made in his name with DAVID.

The WISDOM for which Solomon prayed was a *power to discern between good and bad*, that he might be enabled

* Wisdom of Solomon, vii.

to act, on all occasions, conformably to the rules of piety and justice: this wisdom *he* received by the immediate inspiration of GOD; but even the humblest christian may now attain it by the study of the SCRIPTURES; for Solomon, and other inspired men, were taught *the will of the LORD* not merely for their own sakes, but that they might teach it to all who are desirous of knowing it. That we may judge of the *value* of WISDOM, it will be proper, before we proceed in the history, to consider in what it principally consisted, and how highly it was prized by Solomon.

SECTION XXXV.

KING SOLOMON'S INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING THE VALUE OF TRUE WISDOM.

From Proverbs, Chap. iv. viii.

HEAR, ye children, the instructions of a father, and attend to know understanding. For I give you good doctrine, forsake you not my law.

I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother; he taught me also, and said unto me, let thy heart retain my words, keep my commandments and live.

Get wisdom, get understanding: forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee; she shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.

Wisdom is better than rubies: and all the things that can be desired, are not to be compared to it.

Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the HOLY is understanding.

The fear of the LORD is to hate evil, pride, and arrogancy.

*Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not to
thine*

thine own understanding : in all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths. Put away from thee a froward mouth ; and perverse lips put far from thee ; that thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the path of the righteous.

The way of the wicked is as darkness, they know not at what they stumble : but the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

The curse of the LORD is in the house of the wicked ; but He blesseth the habitation of the just : surely he scorneth the scorner ; but giveth grace unto the lowly.

Keep sound wisdom and discretion, so shall they be life unto thy soul : then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble. When thou liest down thou shalt not be afraid : yea, thou shalt lay down and thy sleep shall be sweet : for the LORD shall be thy confidence.

Happy is the man that findeth WISDOM, and the man that getteth UNDERSTANDING. Length of days are in her right hand ; and in her left hand, riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness ; and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her ; and happy is every one that retaineth her.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

This is a small portion of the book of Proverbs, which consists of a collection of wise maxims, written by king Solomon : the whole deserves the most attentive and diligent perusal : but it will be sufficient to point out at present, that by WISDOM and UNDERSTANDING Solomon evidently meant RELIGIOUS WISDOM ; a knowledge of the will of God, and of the various duties he requires us to perform. By the FEAR* of the LORD, which is said to be the beginning of this WISDOM ; we are to under-

* Bishop Sherlock's Sermons.

stand, a just and proper notion and conception of God, founded on reverence, admiration, honour, and love of God; which will incline us to seek his protection and favour, and induce us to put our whole trust and confidence in his infinite mercy and goodness. This TRUST in God will naturally be productive of peace and tranquility of mind, and will certainly obtain the blessing of God, which will render the practice of RELIGIOUS DUTIES pleasant and delightful to us; and lead us at length to the attainment of EVERLASTING happiness: so that Solomon might truly say, RELIGION is a TREE of LIFE to all that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one who retaineth her!"

Such is the value of *true wisdom*; let us therefore earnestly endeavour to learn its precepts: they are scattered through the sacred writings, like stars in the firmament; each separately viewed affords only a gentle glimmering light; but if we can collect their rays, they will enlighten our minds so that we cannot mistake the path that leads to the regions of bliss. May that ALMIGHTY BEING, who is the *fountain of all wisdom*, assist us in the important pursuit!

SECTION XXXVI.

KING SOLOMON'S WISE JUDGMENT.

From 1 Kings, Chap. iii.

THEN came two women unto the king, and stood before him.

And one woman said, O my lord, this woman and I dwell in one house: and we were together, and there was no stranger with us in the house.

And this woman's child died in the night; because she overlaid it.

And

And she arose at midnight, and took my son from beside me, while thine handmaid slept, and laid it in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom.

And when I rose in the morning to give my child suck, behold it was dead: but when I had considered it in the morning, behold, it was not my son, which I did bear.

And the other woman said, Nay; but the living is my son, and the dead is thy son: and this said, No; but the dead is thy son, and the living is my son. Thus they spake before the king.

Then said the king, The one saith, This is my son that liveth, and thy son is the dead: and the other saith, Nay; but thy son is the dead, and my son is the living.

And the king said, Bring me a sword. And they brought a sword before the king.

And the king said, Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other.

Then spake the woman whose the living child was unto the king, (for her bowels yearned upon her son) and she said, O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it: but the other said, Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it.

Then the king answered and said, Give her the living child, and in no wise slay it: she is the mother thereof.

And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged, and they feared the king: for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to do judgment.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The dispute between the two women was of such an intricate nature as to require uncommon penetration to unravel it; for each asserted her right to the living child with equal earnestness, and there were no witnesses to strengthen

strengthen the claim of either party. Solomon's expedient however effectually discovered the real parent. That careless wretch, who had overlaid her own child, and, to cover her fault, had stolen her neighbour's, readily consented to the proposal of dividing the infant; but parental love abhorred the shocking deed; and the tender mother, solicitous at all events to preserve the life of her little darling, submitted, though not without the severest pangs, to resign it to her adversary. From what a weight of woe was her afflicted mind relieved, when she heard the king's gracious commands to deliver the child to her; which she doubtless pressed to her bosom with raptures of delight, whilst her grateful tongue implored blessings on Solomon!

The young king gained great reputation by this wise decision, which procured him the reverence of his subjects, who were afraid of doing an unjust thing, when they saw that *the wisdom with which God had promised to endue him was in him*; and on this account they both loved and feared him.

SECTION XXXVII.

SOLOMON'S WISDOM—HIS PRINCES—HIS DAILY PROVISIONS—THE EXTENT OF HIS KINGDOM.

From 1 Kings, Chap. iv.

AND Solomon was king over all Israel. And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding, exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea-shore.

And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east-country, and all the wisdom of Egypt.

For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol:

Mahol: and his fame was in all the nations round about.

And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five.

And he spake of trees from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes.

And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom.

And these were the princes which he had. Azariah the son of Zadok the priest. Elihoreph and Ahiah the sons of Shisha, scribes. Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud the recorder.

And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the host: and Zadok was high-priest. And Azariah the son of Nathan was over the officers: and Zabud the son of Nathan was principal officer, and the king's friend.

And Ahishar was over the houshold: and Adoniram the son of Abda was over the tribute.

And Solomon had twelve officers over all Israel, which provided victuals for the king's houshold, and for all that came to king Solomon's table; each man his month in a year. Barley and straw also for the horses and dromedaries, brought they unto the place where the officers were, each man according to his charge.

And Solomon's provision for one day, was thirty measures of fine flour, and threescore measures of meal.

Ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and an hundred sheep, beside harts and roe-bucks, fallow-deer, and fatted fowl.

Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking, and making merry.

And

And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig-tree, from Dan even to Beersheba all the days of Solomon.

And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms, from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought presents and served Solomon all the days of his life. And he had peace on all sides round about him.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The Egyptians and Chaldeans were, in the days of Solomon renowned for wisdom, and yet he excelled them all; for the LORD enabled him, without the usual toil of study, to understand every branch of knowledge to which he applied his mind. He had likewise an extraordinary power of judging in respect to matters of prudence and policy, which he displayed in the arrangement of his domestic affairs, and the regulation of his kingdom. By having purveyors in every division of it, who provided for the king's household in regular rotation, industry was encouraged, and wealth diffused amongst his subjects, because all had their turn in respect to the sale of their different commodities; and every man dwelt safely, for the king invaded no one's property.

The number of kings, who were tributary to Solomon, added also to the riches and grandeur of his kingdom none of them offered to give him disturbance, but were happy in their dependance on such a monarch. His native subjects rejoiced in the ample performance of the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; for they were multiplied to an astonishing degree, and put in possession of every means of happiness this world could afford; so that they had no cause to be solicitous for any thing, but to secure *the blessing of the LORD*, which they had

had been repeatedly assured would reward their obedience; and this blessing included the promise of EVER-LASTING FELICITY. *Happy were the people who were in such a case; yea, blessed were the people who had the LORD for their God.*

SECTION XXXVIII.

HIRAM KING OF TYRE SENDETH TO CONGRATULATE SOLOMON—THEY MAKE AN ALLIANCE TOGETHER.

From 1 Kings, Chap. v. 2 Chron. Chap. ii.

And Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants unto Solomon; (for he had heard that they had anointed him king in the room of his father) for Hiram was ever a lover of David.

And Solomon sent to Hiram, saying, Behold I build an house for the name of the LORD my God, to dedicate it to him.

Thou knowest how that David my father could not build an house unto the name of the LORD his God, for the wars which were about him on every side, until the LORD put them under the soles of his feet.

But now the LORD my God hath given me rest on every side, so that there is neither adversary nor evil occurrent.

And behold, I purpose to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD spake unto David my father, saying, Thy son, whom I will set upon thy throne in thy room, he shall build an house unto my name. And the house which I build is great: for great is our God above all gods.

But who is able to build him a house, seeing the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain him? who am

I then

And then that I should build him an house, save only to burn sacrifice before him? Send me now therefore a man cunning to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in iron, and in purple, and in crimson, and blue, and that can skill to grave with the cunning men that are with me in Judah and in Jerusalem, whom David my father did provide.

Send me also cedar-trees, fir-trees, and algum-trees, out of Lebanon; for I know that thy servants can skill to cut timber in Lebanon: and behold my servants shall be with thy servants, even to prepare me timber in abundance: for the house which I am about to build, shall be wonderfully great.

And behold, I will give to thy servants, the hewers that cut timber, twenty thousand measures of beaten wheat, and twenty thousand measures of barley, and twenty thousand baths of wine, and twenty thousand baths of oil.

As thou didst deal with David my father, and didst send him cedars to build him an house to dwell therein, even so deal with me.

And it came to pass when Hiram heard the words of Solomon, that he rejoiced greatly, and he answered in writing, saying, Because the LORD hath loved his people, he hath made thee king over them,

Blessed be the LORD GOD of Israel that made heaven and earth, who hath given to David the king a wise son, endued with prudence and understanding, that he might build an house for the LORD, and an house for his kingdom.

I have considered the things that thou sentest to me for: and I will do all thy desire concerning timber of cedar, and concerning timber of fir.

And now I have sent a cunning man, endued with understanding, of Hiram my father's; the son of a woman

of the daughters of Dan, and his father was a man of Tyre ; skilful to work in gold and in silver, in brass, in iron, in stone, and in timber, in purple, in blue, and in fine linen, and in crimson; also to grave any manner of graving, and to find out every device which shall be put to him, with thy cunning men, and with the cunning men of my lord David thy father.

Now therefore the wheat, and the barley, the oil, and the wine which my lord hath spoken of, let him send unto his servants ; and we will cut wood out of Lebanon, as much as thou shalt need: and we will bring it to thee in floats by sea, to Joppa; and thou shalt carry it up to Jerusalem.

So Hiram gave Solomon cedar-trees, and fir-trees, according to all his desire.

And Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand measures of wheat for food to his household, and twenty measures of pure oil: thus gave Solomon to Hiram year by year.

And they two made a league together. And king Solomon raised a levy out of all Israel; and the levy was thirty thousand men.

And he sent them to Lebanon, ten thousand a month by courses: a month they were in Lebanon, and two months at home; and Adoniram was over the levy.

And Solomon numbered all the strangers that were in the land of Israel, after the numbering wherewith David his father had numbered them; and they were found an hundred and fifty thousand and three thousand and six hundred.

And he set threescore and ten thousand of them to be bearers of burdens, and fourscore thousand to be hewers in the mountain, and three thousand and six hundred overseers to set the people to work.

And all the people that were left of the Amorites, Hittites,

Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, which were not of the children of Israel, their children that were left after them in the land, whom the children of Israel also were not able utterly to destroy, upon those did Solomon levy a tribute of bond-service unto this day.

But of the children of Israel did Solomon make no bond-men: but they were men of war, and his servants, and his princes, and his captains, and rulers of his chariots, and his horsemen.

And the king commanded, and they brought great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house.

And Solomon's builders, and Hiram's builders did hew them, and the stone-squarers: so they prepared timber and stones to build the house.

And Hiram king of Tyre furnished Solomon with gold according to his desire.

And king Solomon made a navy of ships in Ezion-geber, which is beside Eloth, on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom.

And Hiram sent in the navy his servants, shipmen that had knowledge of the sea, with the servants of Solomon.

And they came to Ophir, and fetched from thence gold four hundred and twenty talents, and brought it to king Solomon.

And the navy also of Hiram that brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir, great plenty of algum trees, and precious stones.

And Solomon had linen yarn brought out of Egypt; the king's merchans received the linen yarn at a price.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It has been already mentioned, that Tyre and Sidon were famous trading cities: they lay near the sea, in the

border of Israel. Their inhabitants had never been at enmity with Israel, excepting when they joined the general confederacy, and David was not commissioned to destroy them. It is said of Hiram their king, (who is supposed to have been the son of that monarch who supplied David with materials for his city) *that he was ever a lover of David*; and we have reason to think that he was a worshipper of the true God, though he might not have had power to reform his subjects.

Lebanon was a noble forest in the north of Canaan, included in the grant of that land to Israel, so that Solomon was a proprietor of all its products; but his subjects who had been mostly trained to war in David's time, were now chiefly employed in cultivating and dispensing the plenty of their land, and were not skilled like the Sidonians in arts and manufactures; but they were able to spare corn, and other valuable commodities, in return for the assistance they required from their neighbours.

The alliance with Hiram was convenient to Solomon in another particular of great consequence to his work; which was the skill of the Tyrians in maritime affairs, in which it seems the Israelites were deficient. No nation in those days was so well acquainted with navigation as we are at this time; for the use of the loadstone was as yet undiscovered, and having no compasses, ships could not venture far out to sea, but made only what are called coasting voyages.

Hiram, the man who was sent by Hiram, seems like Bezaleel to have been endued with peculiar ingenuity, in order to qualify him for preparing the ornaments of the temple; his assistance must have been esteemed by Solomon a valuable acquisition.

Those among the Canaanites, who had embraced the true religion, were allowed to dwell with the Israelites, and

and there is no doubt but their lives were made comfortable to them; and by being employed in preparations for the temple, they were in some measure *sanctified*; for, though a laborious, it was an honourable business; and on this account the Israelites thought it no disgrace to hew timber, and cut marble and stone, to be wrought by the Tyrian Masons and carvers. Different workmen were employed in levelling mount Moriah, in order to prepare it for the foundation of the temple.

From the interchange of commodities between Solomon and Hiram, we may take occasion to observe the great advantages of COMMERCE. GOD has scattered his bounty among all lands; but every country produces some things peculiar to itself, and desirable to others, which lead men to travel from place to place, in order to procure those conveniencies and delicacies which are not to be found at home: and as they carry with them what others wish to possess, they are joyfully received, and willingly supplied: by this means the earth might become one great family, receiving assistance from their brethren, and sharing amongst them the gifts of their HEAVENLY FATHER. Those nations who live secluded are generally savage and ferocious; but commerce introduces the arts of civilization, and serves as a means of propagating true religion and humanity.

SECTION XXXIX.

THE BUILDING OF SOLOMON'S TEMPLE.

From 1 Kings, Chap. vi. 2 Chron. Chap. iii, iv.

AND it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over

Israel, in the month Zif, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD.

In mount Moriah, where the LORD appeared unto David his father, in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

David had given to Solomon his son the pattern of all that he had received by the Spirit, also gold and silver by weight, for all instruments of every kind of service.

And the house when it was in building, was built of stone, made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer, nor ax, nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building.

And the word of the LORD came to Solomon, saying, Concerning this house which thou art in building, if thou wilt walk in my statutes, and execute my judgments, and keep all my commandments to walk in them: then will I perform my word with thee, which I spake unto David thy father.

And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel.

And Solomon built the walls of the house within with boards of cedar, both the floor of the house, and the walls of the ceiling: and he covered them on the inside with wood, and covered the floor of the house with planks of fir.

And the cedar of the house within was carved with knops, and open flowers: all was cedar, there was no stone seen; and he overlaid the house within with pure gold.

And he garnished the house with precious stones for beauty, and the gold was gold of Parvaim.

And the oracle he prepared in the house within, to set there the ark of the covenant of the LORD.

And in the most holy house he made two cherubims of image work, and overlaid them with gold.

The

The wings of these cherubims spread themselves forth twenty cubits: and they stood on their feet, and their faces were inward.

And he made a partition before the oracle with chains of gold.

And he made the vail of blue, and purple, and crimson, and fine linen, and wrought cherubims thereon.

And he made also ten candlesticks of pure gold, and set five on the right hand, and five on the left, with their lamps before the oracle.

And for the entering of the oracle he made doors of olive tree.

And against the wall of the house he built chambers round about, against the walls of the house roundabout, both of the temple, and of the oracle: and he made chambers round about. And Solomon built a porch before the temple.

And he cast two pillars of brass, and two chapiters of molten brass, to set upon the tops of the pillars; and nets of chequer work, and wreaths of chain work, seven for one chapiter, and seven for the other, with pomegranates: and the chapiters were of lily work.

And he set up the pillars in the porch of the temple: and he set up the right pillar, and called the name thereof Jachin: and he set up the left pillar, and called the name thereof Boaz.

Moreover he made an altar of brass; also a molten sea, and under it was the similitude of oxen; it stood upon twelve oxen, three looking towards the north, three towards the west, three towards the south, and three towards the east.

He made also ten lavers, and put five on the right hand and five on the left to wash in them: such things as they offered for the burnt-offering they washed in them but the sea was for the priests to wash in.

He made also ten tables, and placed them in the temple, five on the right side, and five on the left. And he made an hundred basons of gold, and vessels in great abundance.

Furthermore he made the court of the priests, and the great court, and doors for the court overlaid with brass.

And he built the inner court round about with three rows of hewed stones, and a row of cedar beams.

And Solomon built the chambers round about, and the treasures of the house of God, and of the dedicated things, namely, The meat-offerings, the frankincense, and the vessels, the tithes of the corn, the new wine and the oil, and the offerings of the priests.

And Solomon made a brazen scaffold, and set it in the midst of the court.

In the fourth year was the foundation of the house of the LORD laid, in the month Zif.

And the eleventh year, in the month Bul, (which is the eighth month) was the house finished, throughout all the parts thereof, and according to all the fashion of it: so was he seven years in building it.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We have here a description of the magnificent temple which Solomon erected to the name of the LORD in Jerusalem.

The second day of the month Zif, on which it was begun, answered to our 27th of April. Mount Moriah where it was situated, was either a part of mount Sion, or a hill of less compass near it. The front of the temple was turned towards the east.

It is not material to explain the exact dimensions of its several parts; we may judge, from this general account of it, that it was very capacious; but a few particulars require explanation.

There

There was great resemblance between the TABERNACLE, which was made in the days of Moses, and Solomon's TEMPLE; only, as the former was designed to be occasionally removed, and the latter to be fixed, one was made of more durable materials than the other: their use was the same, to serve as a repository for the ARK of the TESTIMONY, which might be considered as God's earthly throne, on which he manifested his DIVINE PRESENCE.

Instead of the curtains and boards which composed the different apartments and courts of the Tabernacle, the Temple was built with the most costly stones and timber that could be procured, and ornamented with gold, silver, and jewels, purchased with the natural produce of that land which the LORD had sanctified; and with these commodities were the foreign artificers also paid.

What is called the HOUSE or TEMPLE, answered to the HOLY PLACE or SANCTUARY in the Tabernacle. The ORACLE built for the reception of the ark was a square room within the temple. The VAIL served to divide the HOLY PLACE from the MOST HOLY, and there was a door besides. The PORCH, which stood before the Temple added grandeur to the building; and it is supposed that there was a wall to separate them, so that the TEMPLE might stand wholly by itself, and also be shut up occasionally.

In respect to the number and uses of the CHAMBERS which were built against the wall of the house it is not possible to come to any certainty; but as there was a staircase from the temple, it is supposed that some of the sacred things were deposited there; and also that they served for the accommodation of the priests, to keep the utensils of the TEMPLE, and the sacred vestments; and also for the priests to eat their portion of the sacrifices in. Besides the chambers adjoining to the temple, there were others in the courts for various uses.

The two large pillars, which Solomon erected, are supposed to have been inscribed with the words JACHIN and BOAZ, from whence they took their names. JACHIN signified, *HE shall establish*. BOAZ *Strength is in him*; intended to remind the king and people of their entire dependance on the LORD.

The PRIESTS' court was separated from the court of the CONGREGATION by a wall sufficient to keep the people from obstructing the business of the priests, but low enough for them without to see what was doing within.

The BRAZEN SEA and LAVERS were for the washings and purifications, which the law required to be performed; and there was a great number of vessels besides; but it is not material to enlarge on their uses, as our religion does not enjoin us to offer sacrifices. We shall, in the next section, read for what purpose the BRAZEN SCAFFOLD was erected.

As no steps were allowed to go up to the altar, which was placed in the midst of the court, it is supposed that there were easy ASCENTS to it, both for the king and people, the entrances to which were by GATES; of these there were three on three sides of the temple, east, north, and south; and two on the west. At one of the western gates was the KING's *ascent*, built in a very superb and costly manner; at the other western gate was a way for the people in general: at the south gate was the HOUSE of ASSUPPIM, supposed to be the place where the priests and Levites assembled at times, about business relating to the temple.

Solomon must have had great satisfaction in erecting this noble edifice for such holy purposes; especially as the LORD vouchsafed to assure him, that, on condition he would be mindful of the covenant made with David, HIS DIVINE PRESENCE should certainly *dwell* amongst his people, and never *forsake* them.

SECTION

SECTION XL.

THE DEDICATION OF SOLOMON'S TEMPLE.

From 1 Kings, Chap. vii, viii.

THUS all the work that Solomon made for the house of the LORD was finished; and Solomon brought in all the things that David his father had dedicated; and the silver and the gold, and all the instruments put he among the treasures of the house of God.

Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel, unto Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which is Zion.

Wherefore all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto the king in the feast, which was in the seventh month.

And all the elders of Israel came; and the Levites took up the ark.

And they brought up the ark, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and all the holy vessels that were in the tabernacle, these did the priests and the Levites bring up.

Also king Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel that were assembled unto him before the ark, sacrificed sheep and oxen, which could not be told or numbered for multitude.

And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD unto his place, to the oracle of the house, into the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubims.

For the cherubims spread forth their wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubims covered the ark and the staves thereof above.

And they drew out the staves of the ark, that the ends of the staves were seen from the ark before the oracle; but they were not seen without. And there it is unto this day.

There was nothing in the ark save the two tables which Moses put therein at Horeb, when the LORD made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of Egypt.

And all the priests that were present were sanctified, and did not then wait by course: Also the Levites which were the singers, all of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, being arrayed in white linen, having cymbals and psalteries and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets:

It came even to pass, when the priests that were come out of the Holy Place, and as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD; and when they lift up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals, and instruments of music, and praised the LORD, saying, For He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the LORD;

So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

David conducted the ARK to JERUSALEM with every testimony of respect that it was in his power to shew; but the magnificence of the present solemnity far exceeded that of the former. David had himself provided for this by appointing the number and offices of the attendants on the temple service.

When

When David assembled the princes, &c. a little before his death*, the Levites amounted to 38,000: 24,000 were to forward the work of the *HOUSE of the LORD*; 6,000 were officers and judges; 4,000 were the guards of the *TEMPLE*; and 4,000 were to praise the *LORD* with musical instruments; and, as more would be wanted after the Temple was built, instead of waiting till they were thirty years old, they were for the future to enter on their employments at twenty. David directed that the priests and Levites should be divided into twenty-four courses by lot; each course to give a weekly attendance at the Temple in their turns. The men who were skilful in singing, amounted at that time to 288: 12 of these were to stand with cymbals, and psalteries, and harps, on common days, every morning and evening, to praise the *LORD*, and to be joined by at least 166 of their brethren, who played upon various musical instruments.

On the great festivals all the singers attended, to sing and play successively, and at least 4,000 musicians. We find, that the whole body of priests and Levites were assembled at the dedication of the Temple.

What a grand and solemn service must this have been! especially with the addition of David's psalms, which were given to the chief musician to be set to music, and sung in order to commemorate the signal mercies of *GOD* to David and his people: and also to preserve the prophecies contained in them, which were inspired by the *HOLY SPIRIT*. Singing these divine hymns made a very delightful part of public worship, and served at once to publish David's gratitude, and to excite the same sentiment in the minds of the people. Many of the psalms were so particularly applicable to the dedication of the Temple, that they assist the imagination in forming an idea of that

* 1 Chron. xxiii. 3, 4, 5.

solemnity,

solemnity, and of the reverence, and holy transports, which must have filled the hearts of those who assisted at it.

It is likely, that on taking up the Ark, they made use of the usual form of words.

Let GOD arise, and let His enemies be scattered; let them also that hate Him, flee before Him, &c.

When they approached the temple, we may suppose they* sang as follows:

O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.

Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto Him with psalms.

For the LORD is a great GOD, and a great king above all gods.

In His hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is His also.

The sea is His, and He made it: and His hands formed the dry land.

O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.

For He is our GOD, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand: to-day if ye will hear His voice,

Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness:

When your fathers tempted Me, proved Me, and saw My work.

Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, for they have not known My ways.

Unto whom I swear in my wrath, that they should not enter into My rest.

* Psalm xcvi.

When

When they reached the gates, it is likely the following psalm * was sung:

Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands.

Serve the LORD with gladness: come before His presence with singing.

Know ye that the LORD He is God; it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of his pasture.

Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise; be thankful unto Him, and bless His name.

For the LORD is good; his Mercy is everlasting: and His truth endureth to all generations.

As soon as they had deposited the ark, we may imagine, that the whole choir of musicians brake forth into joyful strains, like the following †:

O sing unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD all the earth.

Sing unto the LORD, bless His name: shew forth His salvation from day to day.

Declare His glory among the heathen, His wonders among all people.

For the LORD is great, and greatly to be praised: He is to be feared above all gods.

For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the LORD made the heavens.

Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.

Give unto the LORD, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength.

* Psalm c.

† Psalms xcvi. and cxxxvi.

Give unto the LORD the glory due unto His name; bring an offering, and come into His courts.

O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before Him all the earth.

Say among the heathen that the LORD reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved; He shall judge the people righteously.

O give thanks unto the LORD, for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever.

O give thanks unto the GOD of gods: for His mercy endureth for ever.

O give thanks unto the GOD of heaven: for his mercy endureth for ever, &c.

At the conclusion of this pious thanksgiving, we may suppose the LORD graciously shewed His acceptance of his people's services by a glorious CLOUD like that which their fathers had been taught to acknowledge as a *manifestation* of his DIVINE PRESENCE. It certainly must have been a most awful, as well as affecting sight, to behold such a *visible token* of the favour of the GREAT CREATOR.

SECTION XLI.

SOLOMON'S PRAYER AT THE DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE.

From 1 Kings, Chap. viii, ix. 2 Chron. Chap. vi.

THEN said Solomon, The LORD hath said, that he would dwell in the thick darkness...

But I will build an house of habitation for thee, and a place for thy dwelling for ever.

And the king turned his face and blessed the whole congregation of Israel: and all the congregation of Israel stood.

And

And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel who hath with His hands fulfilled that which He spake with His mouth to my father David, saying,

Since the day that I brought forth my people out of the land of Egypt, I chose no city among all the tribes of Israel to build an house in, that my name might be there; neither chose I any man to be ruler over my people Israel:

But I have chosen Jerusalem that my name might be there, and have chosen David to be over my people Israel.

Now it was in the heart of David my father to build an house for the name of the LORD God of Israel.

But the LORD said to David my father, Forasmuch as it was in thine heart to build an house for my name, thou didst well in that it was in thine heart:

Notwithstanding thou shalt not build the house; but thy son which shall come forth out of thy loins he shall build the house for my name.

The LORD therefore hath performed his word that He hath spoken: for I am risen up in the room of David my father, and am set on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised, and have built the house for the name of the LORD God of Israel.

And in it have I put the ark wherein is the covenant of the LORD, that he made with the children of Israel.

And he stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands;

For Solomon had made a brazen scaffold of five cubits long and five cubits broad, and three cubits high, and had set it in the midst of the court: and upon it he stood and kneeled down upon his knees before all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands towards heaven.

And

And said, O LORD GOD of Israel, there is no God like thee in heaven, nor in the earth which keepest covenant, and shewest mercy unto thy servants, that walk before thee with all their hearts:

Thou which hast kept with thy servant David my father that which thou hast promised him; and spakest with thy mouth, and has fulfilled it with thine hand, as it is this day.

Now therefore, O LORD GOD of Israel, keep with thy servant David, my father, that which thou hast promised him, saying, There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit upon the throne of Israel; yet so that thy children take heed to their way to walk in my law as thou hast walked before me.

Now then, O LORD GOD of Israel, let thy word be verified which thou hast spoken unto thy servant David.

But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth! behold, heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built?

Have respect therefore to the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O LORD my God, to hearken unto the cry and the prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee:

That thine eyes may be open upon this house day and night upon the place whereof thou hast said, that thou wouldest put thy name there; to hearken unto the prayer which thy servant prayeth towards this place.

Hearken therefore unto the supplications of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, which they shall make toward this place: hear thou from thy dwelling-place, even from heaven; and when thou hearest, forgive.

If a man sin against his neighbour, and an oath be laid upon him to make him swear, and the oath come before thine altar in thine house;

Then

Then hear thou from heaven, and do, and judge thy servants, by requiting the wicked, by recompensing his way upon his own head, and by justifying the righteous by giving him according to his righteousness.

And if thy people Israel be put to the worse before the enemy, because they have sinned against thee; and shall return and confess thy name, and pray and make supplication before thee in this house; then hear thou from the heavens, and forgive the sin of thy people Israel, and bring them again unto the land which thou gavest to them and to their fathers.

When the heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee; yet if they pray toward this place and confess thy name, and turn from their sin when thou dost afflict them, then hear thou from heaven and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel, when thou hast taught them the good way wherein they should walk; and send rain upon thy land which thou hast given unto thy people for an inheritance.

If there be dearth in the land, if there be pestilence, if there be blasting, or mildew, locusts, or caterpillars, if their enemies besiege them in the cities of their land, whatsoever sore, or whatsoever sickness there be:

Then what prayer or what supplication soever shall be made of any man, or of all thy people Israel, when every one shall know his own sore and his own grief, and shall spread forth his hands in this house:

Then hear thou from heaven thy dwelling-place, and forgive, and render unto every man according unto all his ways, whose heart thou knowest (for thou only knowest the hearts of the children of men)

That they may fear thee, to walk in thy ways, so long as they live in the land which thou gavest unto our fathers.

Moreover

Moreover concerning the stranger, which is not of thy people Israel, but is come from a far country for thy great name's sake, and thy mighty hand, and thy stretched out arm; if they come and pray in this house:

Then hear thou from the heavens, even from thy dwelling-place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for; that all people of the earth may know thy name, and fear thee, as doth thy people Israel, and may know that this house which I have built is called by thy name.

If thy people go out to war against their enemies by the way that thou shalt send them, and they pray unto thee toward this city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name; then hear thou from the heavens their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause.

If they sin against thee (for there is no man which sinneth not), and thou be angry with them, and deliver them over before their enemies, and they carry them away captives into a land far off or near;

Yet if they bethink themselves in the land whither they are carried captive, and turn and pray unto thee in the land of their captivity, saying, We have sinned, we have done amiss, and have dealt wickedly.

If they return to thee with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, whither they have carried them captives, and pray towards their land which thou gavest unto their fathers, and toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house which I have built for thy name:

Then hear thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven thy dwelling-place, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people that have sinned against thee, and all their transgressions wherein they have transgressed against

against thee, and give them compassion before them who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them:

For they be thy people and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest forth out of Egypt, from the midst of the furnace of iron:

That thine eyes may be open unto the supplication of thy servant, and unto the supplication of thy people Israel, to hearken unto them in all that they call for unto thee.

Then hear thou from the heavens, even from thy dwelling-place, their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people which have sinned against thee.

Now my God, let, I beseech thee, thine eyes be open, and let thine ears be attent unto the prayer that is made in this place.

Now therefore arise, O LORD God, into thy resting-place, thou, and the ark of thy strength: let thy priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness.

O LORD God, turn not away the face of thine anointed: remember the mercies of David thy servant.

For thou didst separate them from among all the people of the earth, to be thine inheritance, as thou spakest by the hand of Moses thy servant, when thou broughtest our fathers out of Egypt, O LORD God.

And it was so, that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication unto the LORD, he arose from before the altar of the LORD, from kneeling on his knees, with his hands spread up to heaven.

And he stood, and blessed all the congregation of Israel, with a loud voice, saying,

Blessed

Blessed be the LORD, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant.

The LORD our God be with us, as he was with our fathers: let him not leave us nor forsake us: That he may incline our hearts unto him, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments, which he commanded our fathers.

And let these my words wherewith I have made supplication before the LORD, be nigh unto the LORD our God day and night, that he maintain the cause of his servant, and the cause of his people Israel at all times as the matter shall require: that all the people of the earth may know that the LORD is God, and that there is none else.

Let your heart therefore be perfect with the LORD our God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day.

And the king, and all Israel with him, offered sacrifice before the LORD.

Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house.

And the priests could not enter into the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD's house.

And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.

Then

Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the LORD.

And the priests waited on their offices: the Levites also with instruments of music of the LORD, which David the king had made to praise the LORD, because his mercy endureth for ever, when David praised by their ministry: and the priests sounded trumpets before them and all Israel stood.

Moreover Solomon hallowed the middle of the court that was before the house of the LORD: for there he offered burnt-offerings, and the fat of the peace-offerings, because the brazen altar which Solomon had made was not able to receive the burnt-offerings, and the meat-offerings, and the fat.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The king had caused a place to be erected near the altar, raised above the people, that he might be heard and seen by all of them, whilst he was paying adoration to the KING of Kings and LORD of Lords.

The prayer which Solomon offered up on this occasion is so clear and comprehensive, that there is no need of an explanation. It was perfectly consistent with that *true wisdom* which has *piety* for its foundation; and served to teach the people for what they should pray, and how they ought to address the SUPREME BEING, and from the humility with which the king entreated the LORD to shew forth his GLORY in the house which he had built, they were instructed, that as no fabric however magnificent, can be in reality fit for the habitation of the ALMIGHTY, they should receive the *manifestation of his glorious PRESENCE* as an instance of infinite goodness and condescension.

Solomon's

Solomon's prayer is a most excellent pattern of public devotion; consisting of petitions for *national* blessings, *spiritual* and *temporal*; *forgiveness of sins*, and *deliverance* from the evil consequences of them: to which he added, *intercession* for those nations who were not yet converted to the true religion.

As a token that the sacrifices offered at this time were acceptable, it pleased the LORD to send *holy fire* (as at the dedication of the tabernacle) to consume them. David had furnished the people with words to express their pious raptures as follows*;

The LORD reigneth, let the earth rejoice: let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.

Clouds and darkness, are round about Him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne.

A fire goeth before Him, and burneth up His enemies round about.

His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw and trembled.

The hills melted like wax, at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the LORD of the whole earth.

The heavens declare His righteousness: and all the people see His glory.

Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship Him all ye gods.

Zion heard, and was glad, and the daughter of Judah rejoiced; because of Thy judgments, O LORD.

For Thou, LORD, art high above all the earth: Thou art exalted far above all gods.

Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: He preserveth the souls of His saints, He delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked.

* Psalms xcvi, xcvi, and xlvii.

Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.

Rejoice in the LORD, ye righteous ; and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness.

Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth : make a loud noise, and rejoice and sing praise.

Sing unto the LORD with the harp ; with the harp and the voice of a psalm.

With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the LORD, the king.

O clap your hands, all ye people, shout unto God with the voice of triumph :

For the LORD most high is terrible : He is a great king over all the earth.

He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet.

He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom He loved.

GOD is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.

Sing praises to GOD, sing praises : sing praises unto our king, sing praises.

For GOD is the king of all the earth, sing ye praises with understanding.

The whole solemnity might properly end with the same blessing which David pronounced on the people*.

GOD be merciful unto us, and bless us : and cause His face to shine upon us.

That Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations.

Let the people praise Thee, O GOD : let all the people praise Thee.

* Psalm lxxvii.

O let the nations be glad and sing for joy : for Thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth.

Let the people praise Thee, O GOD ; let all the people praise Thee.

Then shall the earth yield her increase ; and GOD, even our own GOD, shall bless us.

GOD shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.

Though our mode of worship differs greatly from that of the Israelites, Christians may, notwithstanding, collect much valuable instruction from the account of the dedication of Solomon's Temple.

The Sentiments which Solomon entertained of the majesty and goodness of GOD are such, as every one should feel whilst engaged in public worship. Solomon is likewise worthy of imitation in his benevolent solicitude for the welfare of GOD's people, and the propagation of religion. In respect to burnt sacrifices, we have no occasion to follow his example ; neither is it with us a point of duty to build *stately* edifices to his honour.

As the LORD vouchsafed to make his PRESENCE evident in the land of Israel, it was proper that a Temple should be erected in the *place which he had chosen, to fix his name there* ; in order to keep up a perpetual remembrance of His *relation* to this people as their KING, and likewise to shew forth His GLORY and MAJESTY to the surrounding nations ; who hearing that the *living* GOD had actually manifested *Himself* in a *visible* manner at Jerusalem, might forsake idols, and embrace his holy religion.

Whoever considers the greatness and excellency of the SUPREME BEING, will be ready to exclaim with Solomon, *Will GOD in very deed dwell upon earth ? Behold*

the

the heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee, how much less a house which is built with hands ! We cannot, it is true, add to the GLORY of GOD by any human means. He is infinitely perfect and happy in Himself, and the fountain of all happiness in the whole universe : all the service we can pay Him, therefore, is to *proclaim* His power, wisdom, goodness, mercy, justice, truth, as a mean to keep up our own fear, love, and veneration towards Him, and to invite others, by our example, to do the same ; and this service may be performed in an *humble* edifice. It is, however, no sin to erect fine churches, and adorn them properly ; on the contrary, in opulent cities, where the very merchants dwell in palaces, those buildings which are dedicated to Divine service should be proportionably magnificent, provided that the worship performed in them be agreeable to the rules prescribed by their religion ; and this section encourages us to hope that GOD will be present in all places dedicated to public worship, if the hearts of those, who assemble in them, are rightly disposed to hold communion with Him, by fervent prayer, for he is no respecter of persons ; and as, by the diffusive propagation of Christianity, there are now *many* congregations of His people, who cannot *all* meet together in *one Temple*, we may certainly multiply places of worship, and may reasonably hope each will be sanctified by his presence. Our LORD Himself has said,—*Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.* We must not expect, be the building ever so costly, that GOD will *appear* amongst *us* as he did in *Israel* ; because we live under a very different dispensation ; and have the promise of those good things, of which the splendour and magnificence of Solomon's Temple were but very imperfect emblems.

SECTION XLII.

THE LORD GIVETH A TESTIMONY OF HIS ACCEPT-
ANCE OF SOLOMON'S PRAYER.

From 2 Chron. Chap. vii, viii.—1 Kings, Chap. ix.

AND the LORD appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice.

If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people :

If my people which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways ; then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place.

For now I have chosen and sanctified this house that my name may be there for ever : and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually.

And as for thee, if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, and do according to all that I have commanded thee, and shalt observe my statutes and my judgments ; Then will I establish the throne of thy kingdom, according as I have covenanted with David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man to be ruler in Israel.

But if ye turn away and forsake my statutes and my commandments which I have set before you, and shall go and serve other gods, and worship them,

Then I will pluck them up by the roots out of my land, which I have given them ; and this house which I

have

have sanctified for my name, will I cast out of my sight, and will make it to be a proverb and a by-word among all nations.

And this house, which is high shall be an astonishment to every one that passeth by it; so that he shall say, Why hath the LORD done thus unto this land, and unto this house? And it shall be answered, Because they forsook the LORD GOD of their fathers, which brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold on other gods, and worshipped them and served them: therefore hath he brought all this evil upon them.

Then Solomon offered burnt-offerings unto the LORD on the altar of the LORD, which he had built before the porch; even after a certain rate every day, offering according to the commandment of Moses, on the sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the solemn feasts, three times in the year, even in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of the tabernacles.

And he appointed, according to the order of David his father, the courses of the priests to their service, and the Levites to their charges, to praise and minister before the priests, as the duty of every day required: the porters also by their courses, at every gate: for so had David the man of GOD commanded.

And they departed not from the commandment of the king unto the priests and Levites, concerning any matter, or concerning the treasures.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We find from the answer, which the LORD vouchsafed to make, that Solomon's prayer was perfectly agreeable to the Divine will, it may therefore be safely adopted as a model of public devotion; and it will afford great

satisfaction to compare the various parts of this prayer with the prayers of our church service, as they will be found to agree perfectly in substance. It is to be observed, that the LORD entered into a personal covenant with Solomon, when he appeared to him; from the conditions of which we may understand, that neither king nor people, in any nation, are to expect the continuance of the Divine blessing, if they are disobedient to the Divine law.

It must have been a great satisfaction to Solomon to receive so undoubted a testimony, that the LORD had heard his petitions, and that they were acceptable to Him.

SECTION XLIII.

THE BUILDING OF SOLOMON'S HOUSE—THE HOUSE OF LEBANON—THE HOUSE FOR PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER—HIS THRONE, &c.

From 1 Kings, Chap. vii. i ii. x. ix.

SOLOMON was building his own house thirteen years. He built also the house of the forest of Lebanon.

And Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter and brought her into the city of David, until he had made an end of building his own house, and the house of the LORD, and the wall of Jerusalem round about.

Then he made a porch for the throne, where he might judge, even the porch of judgment: and it was covered with cedar from one side of the floor to the other.

And his house, where he dwelt, had another court within the porch, which was of like work. Solomon made also an house for Pharaoh's daughter, (whom he had taken to wife) like unto this porch.

All

All these were costly stones, according to the measures of hewed stones, sawed with saws, within and without, even from the foundation unto the coping, and so on the outside toward the great court.

Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the best gold.

The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne was round behind: and there were stays on either side on the place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the stays.

And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six steps: there was not the like made in any kingdom.

And king Solomon made two hundred targets of beaten gold: six hundred shekels of gold went to one target.

And he made three hundred shields of beaten gold: three pound of gold went to one shield: and the king put them in the house of the forest of Lebanon.

And all king Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold, none were of silver; it was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon.

Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year, was six hundred threescore and six talents of gold.

For the king had at sea a navy of Tarshish, with the navy of Hiram: once in three years came the navy of Tarshish, bringing gold and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks.

And king Solomon made a navy of ships in Ezion-geber, which is beside Eloth, on the shore of the Red-sea, in the land of Edom.

Then went Solomon to Ezion-geber, and to Eloth, at the sea-side in the land of Edom.

And it came to pass at the end of twenty years, when

Solomon had built the two houses, the house of the LORD, and the king's house.

(Now Hiram the king of Tyre had furnished Solomon with cedar-trees, and fir-trees, and with gold, according to all his desire) that then king Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee.

And Hiram came out from Tyre to see the cities which Solomon had given him, and they pleased him not.

And he said, What cities are these which thou hast given me, my brother? And he called them the land of Cabul unto this day.

And Hiram sent to the king six score talents of gold.

And this is the reason of the levy which king Solomon raised for to build the house of the LORD, and his own house, and Millo, and the wall of Jerusalem, and Hazor, and Megiddo, and Gezer.

For Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up, and taken Gezer, and burnt it with fire, and slain the Canaanites that dwelt in the city, and given it for a present unto his daughter Solomon's wife.

And Solomon built Gezer, and Beth-horon the nether. And Baalath, and Tadmor in the wilderness, in the land.

And the cities which Hiram had restored to Solomon, Solomon built them, and caused the children of Israel to dwell there.

He built also store-cities, and chariot-cities, and cities of the horsemen. And Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt.

And Solomon brought up the daughter of Pharaoh out of the city of David unto the house that he had built for her: for he said, My wife shall not dwell in the house of David king of Israel, because the places are holy, whereunto the ark of the LORD hath come.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We find that when king Solomon had built the Temple of the LORD, he caused a stately palace to be erected for his own residence, to adorn the land of Israel, and procure to himself that respect which was due from all the nations of the earth to the king who sat on the throne of the LORD. We find that this building was much longer in hand than the *House of the LORD*, which shews, that Solomon preferred the honour of GOD to his own grandeur.

The house of the forest of Lebanon, is supposed to have been built as a pleasant retreat from the fatigues of state affairs.

It is astonishing to reflect on the riches of Solomon; but the sacred historian accounts for his possessing such stores of wealth, by acquainting us with his numerous resources.

It has already been mentioned, how David gained the ports of Eloth and Ezion-geber. The trade carried on from these places, was the same which is now in the hands of our East-India merchants. It is not exactly described where Ophir and Tarshish were situated; but it is well known, that the eastern territories abound with treasures even in these days, and it is likely that they were much more plentiful formerly.

Solomon finding the traffic so profitable, went to Eloth and Ezion-geber, in order to direct the increase of his navy, and to furnish those ports with inhabitants well skilled in this kind of merchandize; these he selected from the Tyrians Hiram had sent him for hewing timber, &c. for the Temple. From the cordiality which afterwards subsisted between Hiram and Solomon, we may conclude, that the cities which the latter offered to

his friend, were by no means insignificant ; for Solomon had too enlarged a mind to think of making him trifling presents : but these cities, which were in the outskirts of Israel, and had been, till Solomon took possession of them, in the hands of the natives, were most likely encompassed with corn-fields, and pastures, and therefore not acceptable to a Tyrian prince, whose subjects being unskilled in the culture of the earth, had probably learnt to undervalue the choicest gifts of nature, and to prefer luxury and pomp to the more substantial advantages of rural simplicity.

Another branch of commerce which Solomon carried on, was with Egypt. It seems as if, on account of his alliance with Pharaoh's daughter, he was supplied from thence with chariots, &c. at a cheaper rate than the neighbouring nations ; for Solomon sold them again to advantage. How he came to reserve such a number for himself, cannot certainly be accounted for ; but it appears probable, that God's command, which *forbad* kings to *multiply horses to themselves*, was limited to times of *war* ; and as Solomon had a promise of peace during his whole reign, he was at liberty, if he *refrained* from *putting his trust in them*, to indulge in every article of magnificence that the neighbouring princes regarded as marks of royalty ; and that he had a right to *surpass* them in every *temporal* possession, because his grandeur served at *that period* to *display* the *superiority* of the LORD JEHOVAH, who they must perceive was able to bestow wealth and wisdom without measure.

It is not exactly ascertained at what time Solomon married Pharaoh's daughter ; but we will venture to suppose that it was after he had built the Temple : for it is reasonable to imagine, that his whole attention was engaged by that important business, and that the fame of his wisdom made this princess ambitious of an alliance
with

with him, and induced her to become *professedly* a proselyte to the true religion, otherwise it would have been *unlawful* for him to have married her; nor would he have brought an *heathen* into the HOLY CITY, at a time when piety and devotion had entire possession of his heart: it appears as if she soon began to discover some inclination for idolatry, by his thinking it improper for her to dwell any longer in a place peculiarly sanctified by the LORD.

Solomon had reason to say, *that the merchandize of wisdom was better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof, than fine gold*: for he had not only a greater portion of worldly advantages than any man was ever able to acquire by his own industry; but he must necessarily have had a fund of *mental delights*, infinitely superior to all the enjoyments that wealth can purchase.

SECTION XLIV.

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA VISITS KING SOLOMON.

From 1 Kings, Chap. x.

AND when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, concerning the name of the LORD, she came to prove him with hard questions.

And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart.

And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not any thing hid from the king, which he told her not.

And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built, and the meat

of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers and their apparel, and his cup-bearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the LORD: there was no more spirit in her.

And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land, of thy acts, and of thy wisdom.

Howbeit, I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and behold, the half was not told me; thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard.

Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom.

Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighteth in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel; because the LORD loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king to do judgment and justice.

And she gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones: there came no more such abundance of spices, as those, which the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon.

And king Solomon gave unto the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, besides that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty; so she turned and went to her own country she and her servants.

And all the kings of Arabia, and governors of the country, brought gold and silver.

And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, that God had put in his heart.

And Solomon had four thousand stalls for horses and chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen; whom he bestowed

stowed in the chariot cities, and with the king at Jerusalem.

And he reigned over all the kings, from the river even unto the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt.

And all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear the wisdom which God had put in his heart.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The surrounding nations preferred worldly pomp and grandeur to every spiritual blessing: and being possessed of a large share of the treasures of the earth, they were enabled to appear with great outward splendour; on which account they would have despised the LORD's chosen people, if they had been inferior to themselves in this particular. It pleased God, therefore, to raise the kingdom of Israel in a most wonderful manner, by degrees, from a state of abject slavery, to the highest pitch of magnificence; and to occasion all other nations to pay tribute and homage to the king of *his appointment*; by which means the DIVINE BEING proved himself to be, beyond dispute, KING of kings, and LORD of lords.

The queen of Sheba, who visited Solomon, is supposed to have been sovereign of some part of Arabia, and originally descended from Keturah, Abraham's second wife; so that it is very likely, the knowledge of the true God had been transmitted to her by her pious ancestors; though his holy worship was in her kingdom, as in other countries, mixed and corrupted by the introduction of idolatry.

It appears, by the queen of Sheba's taking such a long journey to hear the wisdom of Solomon, that she was desirous of being thoroughly acquainted with the DIVINE WILL; for she did not go to Jerusalem merely to see the glory of Solomon, and vie with him in splendor; but

to prove, whether he were in reality possessed of such extraordinary endowments as fame reported ; and whether it was certainly true, that God had manifested himself in Israel. The inhabitants of the east country were remarkable for their wit and ingenuity ; but Solomon was reputed to excel them all. It was customary for the learned to amuse themselves with difficult questions which required a knowledge of profound sciences to propose and to explain ; in compliance with this custom, the queen of Sheba had furnished herself with problems of this kind from wise men in her kingdom, that she might, by the answers she carried back, confirm the truth of the extraordinary reports they had heard of Solomon's superior understanding. We find that she received ample satisfaction in every particular, and returned to her own country full of admiration of Solomon's glory, and of reverence for that ALMIGHTY BEING, who alone could exalt the human mind so near to perfection, and bestow with unbounded liberality those treasures which mankind in general strive to accumulate with incessant toil, and enjoy not without the interruption of many anxious cares. We learn from the New Testament, that the desire which the queen of Sheba had to know the true God procured her the Divine favour, and obtained her a preference to many lukewarm Christians*.

SECTION XLV.

SOLOMON'S APOSTASY—HIS DEATH.

From 1 Kings, Chap. xi.

But king Solomon loved many strange women, (together with the daughter of Pharaoh) women of the

* Mat. xii. 42.

Moabites,

Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites: of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love.

And it came to pass when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart.

Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem; and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon.

And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense, and sacrificed unto their gods.

And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD GOD of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded.

Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant.

Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it, for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son.

Howbeit, I will not rend away all the kingdom: but I will give one tribe to thy son, for David my servant's sake: and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen.

And the LORD stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite: he was of the king's seed in Edom.

And God stirred him up another adversary, Rezon, the son of Eliadah, which fled from his lord Hadadezar king of Zobah.

And

And he was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon, beside the mischief that Hadad did, and he abhorred Israel, and reigned over Syria.

And Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephrathite of Zereda, Solomon's servant, (whose mother's name was Zeruah, a widow woman) even he lift up his hand against the king.

And this was the cause that he lift up his hand against the king: Solomon built Millo, and repaired the breaches of the city of David his father.

And the man Jeroboam was a mighty man of valour: and Solomon seeing the young man that he was industrious, made him ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph.

And it came to pass at that time when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him in the way: and he had clad himself with a new garment; and they two were alone in the field.

And Ahijah caught the new garment that was on him, and rent it in twelve pieces.

And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the LORD the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee:

(But he shall have one tribe for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel)

Because that they have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon, and have not walked in my ways, to do that which is right in mine eyes, and to keep my statutes and my judgments, as did David his father.

Howbeit,

Howbeit, I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand : but I will make him prince all the days of his life, for David my servant's sake, whom I chose, because he kept my commandments and my statutes ; but I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand, and will give it unto thee, even ten tribes.

And unto his son will I give one tribe, that David my servant may have a light alway before me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen me to put my name there.

And I will take thee, and thou shalt reign according to that all thy soul desireth, and shalt be king over Israel.

And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do that which is right in my sight, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did ; that I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee.

And I will for this afflict the seed of David, but not for ever.

Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam : and Jeroboam arose, and fled into Egypt, unto Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon.

And the time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem, over all Israel, was forty years.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The sacred historian refers us to the books of Nathan the prophet, and others, for the records of the last acts of Solomon's reign ; but these writings are lost to the world, therefore we can come to no certainty in respect to the events of many years ; we may however infer, from the book of Ecclesiastes, written by Solomon himself, that many years did not pass after he ascended the throne before he became elated with prosperity, and grew unmindful from whence it was derived, and for what

what purpose it was bestowed. He found himself raised to the very summit of greatness, and thinking that he had judgment sufficient to guide himself, he threw off his confidence in God, and began to form schemes for *perpetuating* his enjoyments; with this view, as appears from his writings, he occupied his mind in vain researches after *permanent happiness*, independent of the SUPREME BEING; but when he no longer employed his *wisdom* in the service of God, and the good of mankind, it was only productive of fatigue and disappointment.

Solomon then as he says *despised Wisdom*, and resolving to try what PLEASURE would produce, he gave himself up to mirth and festivity, thinking to drive away reflection, by a constant round of dissipation; but these pursuits ended also in discontent; and he soon said of *laughter it is mad, and of mirth what doeth it?*

Solomon supposed, that the means of happiness were still however in his power; and recollecting (it is likely) the delight he had formerly experienced in inspecting the progress of arts, he resolved to employ his wealth in *building and planting*; he therefore spared no expence, but even taxed his subjects to adorn his kingdom with magnificent edifices, and beautiful gardens; but here again he missed his aim. When these works were completed, he endeavoured to procure content by increasing his RICHES: this was also *vanity and vexation of Spirit*; for the thoughts that he must die and leave all his possessions behind him to a son very unfit to rule, embittered his hours, and abated the relish of every enjoyment.

The idolatrous nations were the professed votaries of sensuality; Solomon therefore formed connections with them, by marrying wives from amongst them, in hopes (we may suppose) of learning refinements of luxury unknown in Israel: in this scheme he was unhappily too successful; but

but it was attended with unhappy consequences, instead of procuring satisfaction.

If we had not been able to collect from Solomon's own writings the *cause* of his apostasy, we should be at a loss to account for it; but when we read that he turned his back upon *religion*, and depended *merely* on *human reason*, our wonder ceases, for he became like a ship without a pilot in a dangerous ocean, full of rocks and quicksands.

It is needless to use arguments to prove the justice of God's dealings with this ungrateful prince; it will be sufficient to look back to the *promises* repeatedly made to him and his father, which were all *conditional*, so that Solomon was sufficiently warned beforehand, that the kingdom would not be *continued* to his *posterity* if he *departed from his duty*.

It was impossible that Solomon could be ignorant of the *sinfulness* of erecting temples to *idols*, in that very land especially wherein he had been employed to build a House to the name of the LORD JEHOVAH; and as his reputation for *wisdom* was universally known, his example was very contagious, because every one might think himself justified in his imitation of the *wise* KING SOLOMON.

The unhappy effects of this king's permitting *idolatry* and *luxury* to be introduced into Israel, were soon felt by his people: domestic joys, which had, till this period, made *every one happy under his vine and under his fig-tree*, were exchanged for *riot and dissipation*; and consequently the education of youth must have been neglected, and the service of GOD esteemed a burden; the prosperity of Israel declined, and foreign powers were encouraged to attack them.

Hadad was the young prince who had fled from Edom into Egypt, from Joab's victorious arms. He had found favour in the sight of the king, and was married to the
queen's

queen's sister. Rezon, with whom Hadad entered into a league against Solomon, was the man who deserted from Hadadezar, king of Zobah, and was made king of Damascus; but David dispossessed him; however he had lately recovered his kingdom.

The necessity of defending his dominions against these adversaries, and the various services the Israelites were obliged to render to Solomon, on account of his numerous alliances, made the latter end of his reign grievous to them, and his glory was tarnished in the eyes of all the world.

Jeroboam had distinguished himself by his valour and industry, which induced Solomon to fix upon him as a proper person for the post he had assigned him. This man seems to have been of a very aspiring temper, and to have entertained a *secret wish* to reign over Israel. This wish would have been *fruitless*, if Solomon had not forfeited the *Divine protection*. That Jeroboam might not, however, suppose he had gained dominion over the LORD's *people* by his *own courage or abilities*, a PROPHET was sent to declare the LORD's *intention* of *rending* the kingdom, and giving the government of *ten tribes* to him; and at the same time to inform him *why* Solomon's memory was to be disgraced, and to promise Jeroboam the establishment of the kingdom of Israel in his *family*, if he would imitate David in his *piety and obedience to the commands* of God.

Ahijah, it is supposed, clad *himself* in a new garment, in order to give Jeroboam a sign; for it was customary for prophets to make use of such methods, that their predictions might be more striking: in the present instance, the ten pieces given in the LORD's *name* to Jeroboam were a *token of conveyance* of the tribes to him.

Whilst Solomon continued *religious*, he undoubtedly was a *happy* monarch; there was neither discontent nor faction under his government; he knew not the sorrow
of

of losing thousands of his subjects by war, nor had he cause to fear, whilst he was under the peculiar direction of God, that any of his plans for the good of the nation would fail of success.

Solomon's life, in all probability, was shortened by his excesses, for he was no more than 58 years old when he died. There is great reason to suppose, after he had made his fruitless experiments he had a proper sense of his crimes: but it was too late for him then to bring about a reformation in his kingdom; for the affection of his people was alienated from him, and his wives, whom he had increased to the number of one thousand, had gained such an ascendancy, that no efforts of his own would have prevailed against their different parties: and neither he nor his subjects could hope that the LORD, whose honour was so greatly affronted by them, would work a miracle to change their minds. They had slighted the true God, and preferred idols to him; on which account they were justly left to the consequences which they had been repeatedly warned to expect.

From Solomon's history we may learn, that WISDOM, POWER, and RICHES, are *blessings* only to those who use them properly; when received with thankfulness, enjoyed with moderation, and employed in relieving the distresses of the indigent, or encouraging honest industry, they are productive of great satisfaction; but when they are made subservient to vice, they render their possessors despicable and unhappy.

*Whatsoever SOLOMON'S eyes desired, he kept not from them; neither withheld he his heart from any joy**: but *experience* taught him, that *there was no profit in any worldly enjoyment*; and his search after HAPPINESS concluded with a thorough conviction, that it was only to be obtained by *fearing GOD, and keeping His commandments.*

* Ecclesiastes.

SECTION XLVI.

THE ISRAELITES ASSEMBLE TO CROWN REHOBAM—
TEN TRIBES REVOLT, AND MAKE JEROBOAM KING
OVER ISRAEL.

From 1 Kings, Chap. xii. 2 Chron. Chap. xi.

AND after the death of Solomon, Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him king.

And it came to pass when Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who was yet in Egypt, heard of it, (for he was fled from the presence of king Solomon, and Jeroboam dwelt in Egypt,)

That they sent and called him: and Jeroboam and all the congregation of Israel came and spake unto Rehoboam, saying, Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee.

And he said unto them, Depart yet for three days, then come again to me. And the people departed.

And king Rehoboam consulted with the old men that stood before Solomon his father, while he yet lived, and said, How do you advise, that I may answer this people?

And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever.

But he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men that were grown up with him, and which stood up before him: and he said unto them, What counsel give ye, that
we

we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke which thy father did put upon us, lighter?

And the young men that were grown up with him, spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins.

And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke; my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had appointed, saying, Come to me again the third day.

And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the old men's counsel that they gave him; and spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke; my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the LORD, that he might perform his saying, which the LORD spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? Neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents.

But as for the children of Israel which dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them.

Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the tribute;

tribute; and all Israel stoned him with stones that he died: therefore king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot to flee to Jerusalem.

So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day.

And it came to pass when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was come again, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only.

And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, with the tribe of Benjamin, an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, which were warriors; to fight against the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam the son of Solomon.

But the word of God came unto Shemaiah the man of God; saying, Speak unto Rehoboam the son of Solomon king of Judah, and unto all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the remnant of the people, saying, Thus saith the LORD. Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house, for this thing is from me.

They hearkened therefore to the word of the LORD, and returned to depart, according to the word of the LORD. And Rehoboam dwelt in Jerusalem, and built cities for defence in Judah.

And he fortified the strong holds, and put captains in them, and store of victuals, and of oil and wine.

And in every several city he put shields and spears, and made them exceeding strong, having Judah and Benjamin on his side.

And the priests and the Levites that were in all Israel, resorted to him out of all their coasts.

So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and made Rehoboam the son of Solomon strong, three years : for three years they walked in the way of David and Solomon.

And Rehoboam made Abijah the son of Maachah the chief, to be ruler among his brethren : for he thought to make him king.

And he dealt wisely, and dispersed of all his children throughout all the countries of Judah and Benjamin, unto every fenced city : and he gave them victual in abundance. And he desired many wives.

And it came to pass when Rehoboam had established the kingdom, and had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the LORD, and all Israel with him.

And it came to pass that in the fifth year of king Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, (because they had transgressed against the LORD) with twelve hundred chariots, and threescore thousand horsemen : and the people were without number that came with him out of Egypt, the Lubims, the Sukkiims, and the Ethiopians.

And he took the fenced cities which pertained to Judah, and came to Jerusalem.

Then came Shemaiah the prophet to Rehoboam, and to the princes of Judah that were gathered together to Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said unto them, Thus saith the LORD, Ye have forsaken me, and therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak.

Whereupon the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves : and they said, The LORD is righteous.

And when the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah, saying, They have humbled themselves, therefore I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance : and my wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak.

Nevertheless, they shall be his servants : that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.

So Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, and took away the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house ; he took all ; he carried away also the shields of gold which Solomon had made.

Instead of which king Rehoboam made shields of brass, and committed them to the hands of the chief of the guard, that kept the entrance of the king's house.

And when the king entered into the house of the LORD, the guard came and fetched them, and brought them again into the guard-chamber.

And when he humbled himself, the wrath of the LORD turned from him, that he would not destroy him altogether ; and also in Judah things went well.

So king Rehoboam strengthened himself in Jerusalem, and reigned. Rehoboam was one and forty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel to put his name there. And his mother's name was Naamah an Ammonitess.

And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD.

And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days.

And Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David. And Abijah his son reigned in his stead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The young men whom Rehoboam consulted, were persons who had been educated with him, and who were quite

quite unskilled in state affairs. Rehoboam seems to have been a very imprudent prince, or he would not have preferred the advice of such ignorant persons to the counsel of those, whom age and experience had taught wisdom; besides, if he had taken a little time for reflection, his own reason would have suggested, that such kind of threatenings as he made use of were more likely to aggravate than to appease the discontent of the people. Of what nature the grievances they complained of were, we cannot exactly tell; but it is likely, that Solomon had demanded contributions of them, towards his unbounded expences, which they murmured to pay.

Rehoboam did not endeavour to procure the favour of the LORD; instead of that, he left JERUSALEM, where the TEMPLE was, and repaired to *Shechem*; this shews, that he was not a religious prince. The people, it is likely, sent for Jeroboam from Egypt, to intimidate Rehoboam. When his subjects revolted, the king employed a very unpromising method to conciliate them; for Adoram, as *collector of the tribute*, was the most obnoxious person he could send; because it appeared that he came to demand what they had already refused to pay; so that it was natural to expect he would fall a victim to their rage.

In mercy to the house of David, and in remembrance of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the LORD did not utterly *forsake* his people, but from this time frequently made known his will by means of his own PROPHETS; and on the present occasion the LORD graciously sent Shemaiah to prevent any further contests between the tribes, as it was in vain for *Judah* to strive against the DIVINE WILL; neither would GOD permit *Israel* to cut off the *branch of DAVID*.

We must not suppose, that JEROBOAM's *ambition*, or REHOBAM's *imprudence*, were from the LORD; the original

cause of this unhappy revolution was the introduction of IDOLATRY into the land. While the king of Israel was careful of preserving the worship of GOD *pure and undefiled*, he was considered as the LORD's *viceroy*; and, according to the *covenant* which the LORD had graciously made, he had reason in all important affairs to expect direction from GOD, by which he was *bound* to act. The SUPREME BEING certainly knoweth beforehand what every person *will* do, but he does not *incline* any one to *evil*; on the contrary, GOD has taught men the consequences of *good* and *evil*. If they are objects of *mercy*, His Providence interposes for their *happiness*; but if, on the contrary, they are *impious* and *oppressive*, and reject the warning He has caused to be given, GOD *leaves* them at last to fall into *destruction*. The son of Solomon was disgraced, not only on account of his father's apostacy, but for neglecting to destroy the idols which had been set up in Israel, and for omitting to solicit for himself the favour of God; and Jeroboam's ambition was suffered to succeed, because the ten tribes were unworthy of a better king.

Temporal rewards and punishments are not perhaps so equally dispensed as formerly, either towards kingdoms or particular individuals, for we are now taught to look for retribution in a future state; but the kingdom of Israel had peculiar promises, that no wickedness should succeed against them whilst they continued to shew forth the glory of GOD; and they had also threatenings of severe temporal punishments, if they brought dishonour upon His HOLY NAME, by putting idols in competition with the LORD GOD.

Instead of removing the abominations, which provoked the LORD to withdraw His *glorious PRESENCE*, Rehoboam was intent only upon strengthening his kingdom by *human means*, and both he and his people increased in wickedness;

edness ; but the LORD was still mindful of His covenant with David, and for *his sake* prevented the ruin which threatened Judah, by restraining Shishak from destroying them ; and, that they might know that it was the power of the LORD that delivered them, the prophet was sent *beforehand* to bring them to repentance. Happily for Judah they listened to his remonstrances. Shishak was however permitted to take the golden shields, which had been the pride of Solomon and Rehoboam : and also to despoil the Temple, which had already lost its *greatest GLORY*.

Rehoboam seems to have been affected with this deliverance, and to have frequented the Temple afterwards ; but still his service was deficient, for he *prepared not his heart to do the will of the LORD*.

As we lately read that Solomon was married to Pharaoh's daughter, it appears strange that Shishak, king of Egypt, should come against his son ; but about this time there happened a revolution in Egypt, when that race of kings, from whom Solomon's father-in-law descended, was dispossessed of the throne, and was succeeded by another, of whom Shishak was the first monarch.

How was the glory of Israel eclipsed by the division of the kingdom ! Yet it was perfectly consistent with Divine justice that it should be so, for both Rehoboam and the people had forfeited GOD's favour.

After the death of Solomon we read no more of the GLORY of the LORD appearing in the Tabernacle. From the time of this king's apostasy the will of the LORD was made known by *Prophets*, to whom, it is said, the WORD of the LORD came. The exact meaning of this expression cannot be known, but it is understood to signify, that, on particular occasions, the WORD OF THE LORD, or the LORD GOD, was so immediately present with the Pro-

phets, as to speak by them; or employ their organs of speech to declare the Divine Will, instead of their own sentiments; and that the LORD also, by a divine energy, directed the Prophets where to go, and what to do, instead of leaving them to consult their *own reason* for expedients, in cases relating to their prophetic office.

SECTION XLVII.

THE REIGN OF JEROBOAM, KING OF ISRAEL.

From 1 Kings, Chap. xii, xiii, xiv.

THEN Jeroboam built Shechem in mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein, and went out from thence, and built Peniel.

And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: if this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even to Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah.

Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto the people, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

And he set the one in Beth-el, and the other put he in Dan.

And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan.

And he made a house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi.

And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month,

on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar, (so did he in Beth-el) sacrificing unto the calves that he had made; and he placed in Beth-el the priests of the high places which he had made.

So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Beth-el, the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart: and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel, and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense.

And behold there came a man of God out of Judah, by the word of the LORD unto Beth-el: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense.

And he cried against the altar in the word of the LORD, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith the LORD, Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name, and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high-places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee.

And he gave a sign the same day, saying, This is the sign which the LORD hath spoken; Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out.

And it came to pass when king Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, which had cried against the altar in Beth-el, that he put forth his hand from the altar, saying, Lay hold on him. And his hand which he put forth against him, dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him.

The altar also was rent, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD.

And the king answered and said unto the man of God, Intreat now the face of the LORD thy God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored me again. And the

man of God besought the LORD, and the king's hand was restored him again, and became as it was before.

And the king said unto the man of God, come home with me, and refresh thyself, and I will give thee a reward.

And the man of God said unto the king, If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread, nor drink water in this place.

For so was it charged me by the word of the LORD, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest.

So he went another way, and returned not by the way that he came to Beth-el.

After this thing, Jeroboam returned not from his evil way, but made again of the lowest of the people, priests of the high-places : whosoever would, he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places.

And this thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth.

At that time Abijah the son of Jeroboam fell sick.

And Jeroboam said to his wife, Arise, I pray thee, and disguise thyself, that thou be not known to be the wife of Jeroboam : and get thee to Shiloh ; behold, there is Ahijah the prophet, which told me that I should be king over this people.

And take with thee ten loaves, and cracknels, and a cruse of honey, and go to him : he shall tell thee what shall become of the child.

And Jeroboam's wife did so, and arose and went to Shiloh, and came to the house of Ahijah : but Ahijah could not see, for his eyes were set by reason of his age.

And the LORD said unto Ahijah, Behold, the wife of Jeroboam cometh to ask a thing of thee for her son, for he is sick : thus and thus shalt thou say unto her : for it shall

shall be when she cometh in, that she shall feign herself to be another woman.

And it was so, when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet, and she came in at the door, that he said, Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam, why feignest thou thyself to be another? for I am sent to thee with heavy tidings.

Go, tell Jeroboam, Thus saith the LORD GOD of Israel, Forasmuch as I exalted thee from among the people, and made thee prince over my people Israel,

And rent the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it thee; and yet thou hast not been as my servant David, who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to do that only which was right in mine eyes, but hast done evil above all that were before thee: for thou hast gone and made thee other gods, and molten images, to provoke me to anger, and hast cast me behind thy back:

Therefore, behold, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam every man, and him that is shut up and left in Israel, and will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam as a man taketh away dung, till it be all gone.

Him that dieth of Jeroboam in the city, shall the dogs eat: and him that dieth in the field, shall the fowls of the air eat: for the LORD hath spoken it.

Arise thou, therefore, get thee to thine own house: and when thy feet enter into the city, the child shall die.

And all Israel shall mourn for him, and bury him: for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because in him there is found some good thing toward the LORD God of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam.

Moreover, the LORD shall raise him up a king over Israel, who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam that day: For the LORD shall smite Israel, as a reed is shaken in

the water, and He shall root up Israel out of this good land, which he gave to their fathers, and shall scatter them beyond the river, because they have made their groves, provoking the LORD to anger.

And he shall give Israel up, because of the sin of Jeroboam, who did sin, and who made Israel to sin.

And Jeroboam's wife arose, and departed, and came to Tirzah : and when she came to the threshold of the door, the child died.

And they buried him, and all Israel mourned for him, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by the hand of his servant Ahijah the prophet.

And the days which Jeroboam reigned, were two and twenty years : and he slept with his fathers, and Nadab his son reigned in his stead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Jeroboam soon forgot the admonitions of the prophet, and brought the *curse* of God upon himself by the abominable practice of idolatry. It seems that he apprehended Rehoboam would have the advantage, and entice the people back to himself, if they continued to resort to the Temple at JERUSALEM ; he therefore studied for an expedient to prevent them.

In Solomon's reign *the people built them high places on every high hill, and under every green tree ; and did according to all the abominations of the nations, which the LORD cast out before the children of Israel ;* so they were easily induced to forsake the LORD.

Jeroboam knew that he had not the means to build a temple to vie with that of Solomon, but something he thought he must do to prevent the desertion of his people. Having resided for a long time in Egypt, he wished to form an alliance with that country, with a view to strengthen his power. Among their numerous idols the Egyptians

Egyptians had two oxen which they worshipped ; one at the city of Memphis, called Apis ; the other at Hierapolis, called Mnepis. That he might therefore gain the favour of his people, Jeroboam made idols in the form of these oxen, and placed them likewise in different parts of his kingdom. Dan was famous, in the time of Micah, for his Teraphim ; and Bethel was esteemed a sacred place on account of Jacob's vision of the ladder, and the LORD's frequent appearance to him. By setting up his golden calves in these places, which had long been esteemed sacred, Jeroboam contrived at once to please the Egyptians, and to gratify his own subjects.

Zoan, the city at which the new race of Egyptian kings resided, was not far from the borders of Canaan. It was the interest of former kings to be upon good terms with David's race ; but Shishak had cause to fear, that Solomon's son would be ready to join the *deposed* family in Egypt ; for this reason it was politic for him to encourage Jeroboam, who appeared to be an usurper also.

All the order of priests and Levites adhered to the Temple service, by which they drew the displeasure of Jeroboam upon them ; and having occasion for ministers, he chose such as we read of. This was a great act of presumption, but Jeroboam stopt at nothing to effect his ambitious purposes ; for, without the least regard to the *ordinances* of the LORD, he instituted *new festivals* ; so that he totally subverted the public worship, and the people plunged themselves headlong into the grossest idolatry, and entirely forsook the LORD ; but, in his infinite mercy, the LORD vouchsafed to call them to *repentance*, by sending a prophet, and working such miracles as must have converted them, if they had not hardened their hearts.

The *mercy* of God was shewn to Jeroboam in warning him of the destruction he would bring on his family ; and also to his son, the good young Abijah, by taking him

into a happier state : his death, which was a punishment to the parent, was a blessing to the child, by removing him to a better world.

The LORD threatened, by the mouth of His prophet, that, “ *he would give Israel up, because of the sin of Jeroboam, who did sin, and who made Israel to sin.*” We must not from this suppose, that Israel would have been punished for the wickedness of their sovereign, if the people had adhered to their duty. They well knew that Jeroboam’s proceedings were directly *contrary to the law of God* ; yet they *willingly* made themselves *partakers* of his crime, and therefore deserved to be given up. It is called *Jeroboam’s sin*, because he introduced it : but the people must have been inclined to idolatry, or they would not have been so easily influenced by him.

Jeroboam and the Israelites were as *undeserving* as the people of Judah of *God’s favour* ; and one is lost in admiration of the divine forbearance, that they were suffered to remain on the face of the earth?

The prediction, which the prophet delivered respecting JOSIAH, was a very remarkable one, and it was afterwards exactly accomplished*. We are told, that the young prophet who spake it came to a very *untimely end* ; for he suffered himself to be persuaded by another prophet, who pretended to be also inspired, to go to *his house*, instead of obeying the LORD’s commands, which the young prophet had *himself* received by *divine inspiration* : to punish him for thus inconsiderately *preferring* the word of *a man* to the word of GOD, he was torn to pieces by a lion (to save him from which he was perhaps directed to return home another way). This punishment appears very severe, because it seems that the young prophet really thought the old prophet spake truth ; but we may suppose GOD *permitted* him to be *slain* for a warning to

* 1 Kings xiii. 20, &c.

others, which was particularly necessary in the *land of Israel* in *those times*; and whenever it is the **DIVINE WILL** to inflict *judgments*, which to *human apprehension* appear severe, we must recollect, that *this* life is not the *whole* of our existence, but there is a *future state*, where **GOD** will bring every work into judgment, and every secret thought, whether it be good, or whether it be evil, and reward us accordingly.

SECTION XLVIII.

**THE REIGN OF ABIJAM, CALLED ALSO ABIJAH,
KING OF JUDAH.**

From 1 Kings, Chap. xv. 2 Chron. Chap. xiii.

Now in the eighteenth year of king Jeroboam the son of Nebat, reigned Abijam over Judah.

Three years reigned he in Jerusalem; and he walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him: and his heart was not perfect with the **LORD** his **GOD**, as the heart of David his father.

Nevertheless, for David's sake did the **LORD** his **GOD** give him a lamp in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him, and to establish Jerusalem: because David did that which was right in the eyes of the **LORD**, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.

And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all the days of his life.

And Abijam set the battle in array with an army of valiant men of war, even four hundred thousand chosen men. Jeroboam also set the battle in array against him with eight hundred thousand chosen men, being mighty men of valour.

And Abijam stood up upon mount Zemaraim, which is
in

in mount Ephraim, and said, Hear me, thou Jeroboam, and all Israel.

Ought ye not to know, that the LORD God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever, even to him and to his sons by a covenant of salt?

Yet Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon the son of David, is risen up and hath rebelled against his lord.

And there are gathered unto him vain men, the children of Belial, and have strengthened themselves against Rehoboam the son of Solomon, when Rehoboam was young and tender-hearted, and could not withstand them.

And now ye think to withstand the kingdom of the LORD in the hand of the sons of David; and ye be a great multitude, and there are with you golden calves, which Jeroboam made you for gods.

Have ye not cast out the priests of the LORD the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and have made you priests after the manner of the nations of other lands? so that whosoever cometh to consecrate himself with a young bullock and seven rams, the same may be a priest of them that are no gods.

But as for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not forsaken him: and the priests which minister unto the LORD are the sons of Aaron, and the Levites wait upon their business.

And they burnt unto the LORD every morning and every evening burnt sacrifices and sweet incense: the shewbread also set they in order upon the pure table; and the candlestick of gold with the lamps thereof, to burn every evening: for we keep the charge of the LORD our God, but ye have forsaken him.

And behold, God himself is with us for our captain, and his priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against

against you. O ye children of Israel, fight ye not against the LORD GOD of your fathers ; for ye shall not prosper.

But Jeroboam caused an ambushment to come about behind them : for they were before Judah, and the ambushment was behind them.

And when Judah looked back, behold, the battle was before and behind ; and they cried unto the LORD, and the priests sounded with the trumpets.

Then the men of Judah gave a shout ; and as the men of Judah shouted, it came to pass, that GOD smote Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijam and Judah.

And the children of Israel fled before Judah : and GOD delivered them into their hand.

And Abijam and his people slew them with a great slaughter : so there fell down slain of Israel five hundred thousand chosen men.

Thus the children of Israel were brought under at that time, and the children of Judah prevailed, because they relied upon the LORD GOD of their fathers.

And Abijam pursued after Jeroboam, and took cities from him, Beth-el with the towns thereof, and Jeshanah with the towns thereof, and Ephraim with the towns thereof.

Neither did Jeroboam recover strength again in the days of Abijam, and the LORD struck him, and he died.

But Abijam waxed mighty, and married fourteen wives, and had twenty and two sons, and sixteen daughters.

And the rest of the acts of Abijam, and his ways and his sayings, are written in the story of the prophet Iddo.

And Abijam slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David ; and Asa his son reigned in his stead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

In the speech which Abijam addressed to Jeroboam and
the

the Israelites, calling upon them *in the name of the LORD* to forsake idolatry, and return to their duty, he spake agreeably to the will of GOD, and as became the descendant of David : Jeroboam, on the contrary, *presumptuously opposed* the LORD, and, depending on his superior army, he resolved to attempt the destruction of Judah, though he had formerly been forbidden by a divine command to lift up his hand against the race of David ; the LORD, therefore, not only delivered Judah, but enabled Abijam, by His Almighty power, to obtain a wonderful victory over the Israelites ; and we are taught to regard the *DIVINE interposition*, on this occasion, as a proof of GOD's remembrance of David, to whom he had promised, that his fidelity should be finally rewarded by blessings on his posterity, though for reasons, which must appear just, they would be afflicted for a time.

If Abijam and the people of Judah had continued steadfast in the principles which seemed to have actuated them on this occasion, the favour of the LORD would have remained with them for their *own sakes* ; but we are told, that this king *walked in all the sins of his father*, for he removed not the high places, neither did he destroy idolatry, as he might have done, when he had Beth-el in his power ; and he found by experience, that not only his people would stand by him in the attempt, but that he had the greatest reason to expect that the LORD would Himself assist him in the vindication of his honour : for this neglect, it is likely, that the LORD shortened the days of Abijam.

SECTION XLIX.

THE REIGNS OF NADAB AND BAASHA, KINGS OF ISRAEL.

From 1 Kings, Chap. xv, xvi.

AND Nadab the son of Jeroboam began to reign over
Israel,

Israel, in the second year of Asa king of Judah, and reigned over Israel two years.

And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin.

And Baasha the son of Ahijah, of the house of Issachar, conspired against him; and Baasha smote him at Gibbethon, which belongeth to the Philistines, (for Nadab and all Israel laid siege to Gibbethon.)

And Baasha did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin.

And it came to pass when he reigned, that he smote all the house of Jeroboam, he left not to Jeroboam any that breathed, until he had destroyed him, according unto the saying of the LORD, which he spake by his servant Ahijah the Shilonite.

Because the sins of Jeroboam which he sinned, and which he made Israel to sin, by his provocation wherewith he provoked the LORD GOD of Israel to anger.

And there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days.

Then the word of the LORD came to Jehu the son of Hanani, against Baasha, saying, Forasmuch as I exalted thee out of the dust, and made thee prince over my people Israel, and thou hast walked in the way of Jeroboam, and hast made my people Israel to sin, to provoke me to anger with their sins:

Behold, I will take away the posterity of Baasha, and the posterity of his house: and will make thy house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

Him that dieth of Baasha in the city, shall the dogs eat; and him that dieth of his in the fields, shall the fowls of the air eat.

So

So Baasha slept with his fathers, and was buried in Tirzah, and Elah his son reigned in his stead.

And also by the hand of the prophet Jehu the son of Hanani, came the word of the LORD against Baasha, and against his house, even for all the evil that he did in the sight of the LORD, in provoking him to anger with the work of his hands, in being like the house of Jeroboam, and because he killed Nadab.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Nadab's wicked reign was of short duration, for he shut himself totally out from the LORD's favour by idolatrous practices and hardened obduracy; therefore the treachery of Baasha was suffered to succeed against him. The cruelty of this ambitious man in destroying so many of his predecessor's relations proceeded from his own *bad heart*, and was therefore reckoned amongst the *crimes* for which he was cut off. Baasha did not, in this matter, act in consequence of any express command from God to destroy the posterity of Jeroboam, but in order to usurp the throne: he was therefore guilty of *murder*. We must not suppose, therefore, that he was *instigated* by God, but only that *he was not restrained*, as he would have been, if Jeroboam and his family had endeavoured to secure the Divine protection. We have already met with instances, in the course of this history, of the LORD's taking compassion on repentant sinners, and withholding that destruction which would have fallen on them if they had persisted in their sin, particularly in the case of David. Jeroboam and his race would have been preserved in like manner if they had imitated David's example: so that the LORD might justly say to Baasha, by the mouth of his prophet, *Forasmuch as I exalted thee out of the dust, and made thee*
prince

prince over my people Israel, &c. because it would have been *impossible* for Baasha to have exalted *himself*, contrary to the DIVINE WILL.

We have cause to admire the goodness and justice of GOD in every instance, for they were both displayed, even in his dispensations towards those bad kings, who resisted his authority and despised his power.

SECTION L.

THE REIGN OF ASA KING OF JUDAH.

From 1 Kings, Chap. xvi.—2 Chron. Chap. xiv, xv, xvi.

So Abijam slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David. And Asa his son reigned in his stead. In his days the land was quiet ten years.

And Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God.

For he took away the altars of the strange gods, and the high places, and brake down the images, and cut down the groves :

And commanded Judah to seek the LORD GOD of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandments.

Also he took away out of all the cities of Judah the high places and the images : and the kingdom was quiet before him.

And he built fenced cities in Judah : for the land had rest, and he had no war in those years ; because the LORD had given him rest.

Therefore he said unto Judah, Let us build these cities ; and make about them walls and towers, gates and bars, while the land is yet before us ; because we have sought the LORD our GOD, we have sought him, and he hath given us rest on every side. So they built and prospered.

And

And Asa had an army of men that bare targets and spears, out of Judah three hundred thousand, and out of Benjamin, that bare shields and drew bows two hundred and fourscore thousand; all these were mighty men of valour.

And there came out against them Zerah the Ethiopian with an host of a thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots: and he came unto Mareshah.

Then Asa went out against him, and they set the battle in array in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah.

And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude: O LORD, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee.

So the LORD smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah, and the Ethiopians fled.

And Asa and the people that were with him pursued them unto Gerar: and the Ethiopians were overthrown, that they could not recover themselves: for they were destroyed before the LORD and before his host; and they carried away very much spoil.

And they smote all the cities round about Gerar, for the fear of the LORD came upon them; and they spoiled all the cities, for there was exceeding much spoil in them.

They smote also the tents of cattle, and carried away sheep and camels in abundance, and returned to Jerusalem.

And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded.

And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him.

him, he will be found of you ; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.

Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law.

But when they in their trouble did turn unto the LORD God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them.

And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the countries.

And nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city : for God did vex them with all adversity.

Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak : for your work shall be rewarded.

And when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from mount Ephraim, and renewed the altar of the LORD that was before the porch of the LORD.

And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon : for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the LORD his God was with him.

So they gathered themselves together in Jerusalem in the third month, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa.

And they offered unto the LORD the same time, of the spoil which they had brought, seven hundred oxen, and seven thousand sheep.

And they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD God of their fathers, with all their heart and with all their soul : that whosoever would not seek the LORD God of Israel, should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman.

And

And they sware unto the LORD with a loud voice, and with shouting, with trumpets, and with cornets.

And all Judah rejoiced at the oath : for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire, and he was found of them : and the LORD gave them rest round about.

And also concerning Maachah, the mother of Asa the king, he removed her from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove : and Asa cut down her idol and stamped it, and burned it at the brook Kidron.

But the high places were not taken away out of Israel : nevertheless, the heart of Asa was perfect all his days.

And there was no more war unto the five and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa.

In the six and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa, Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah, and built Ramah, to the intent that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah.

Then Asa brought out silver and gold out of the treasures of the house of the LORD, and of the king's house, and sent to Ben-hadad, king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying, There is a league between me and thee, as there was between my father and thy father :

Behold, I have sent thee silver and gold ; go break thy league with Baasha, king of Israel, that he may depart from me.

And Ben-hadad hearkened unto king Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel : and they smote Ijon and Dan, and Abel-maim, and all the store cities of Naphtali.

And it came to pass, when Baasha heard it, that he left off building of Ramah, and let his work cease.

Then Asa the king took all Judah ; and they carried away

away the stones of Ramah, and the timber thereof, wherewith Baasha was building; and he built therewith Geba and Mizpah.

And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said unto him, Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the LORD thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand.

Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the LORD, he delivered them into thine hand.

For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars.

Then Asa was wroth with the seer, and put him in a prison-house: for he was in a rage with him because of this thing. And Asa oppressed some of the people the same time.

And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great: yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians.

And Asa slept with his fathers, and died in the one and fortieth year of his reign.

And they buried him in his own sepulchres, which he had made for himself in the city of David, and laid him in the bed which was filled with sweet odours and divers kinds of spices prepared by the apothecaries' art: and they made a very great burning for him.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Asa, we find, employed the peace with which he was blessed in reforming many abuses, and made great advances towards extirpating idolatry, and for this purpose he destroyed all the *high places* in which there were any altars erected to strange gods *, but he did not venture to take away those where the LORD GOD alone was worshipped, because they were at that time regarded as sacred, on account of the former appearance of the LORD or some other miraculous event.

Maachah, the mother of Asa, is supposed to have been not only an idolatress, but a priestess to one of the idols: the king's behaviour to her was therefore perfectly consistent with his duty to GOD.

It seems that Abijah in his reign had set aside according to usual custom, some of the spoil to be dedicated to the LORD: but his piety did not continue long enough for him to complete his purpose.

Zerah, the king who invaded Jerusalem, is supposed to have come from Arabia: notwithstanding he brought such an astonishing army, his attempt was fruitless; for as Israel confided in the LORD, the *rock of their salvation*, it was in vain for *human power* to strive against them.

Though GOD did not in those days honour his people with a *visible token* of His *immediate PRESENCE* in the Tabernacle, He still gave repeated proofs that He was near at hand, to hear their prayers, and lend them assistance, if they would but seek Him with a willing heart. His servants, the prophets, were occasionally sent to admonish and encourage them, that they might not forget

* This explanation accounts for the seeming disagreement between ch. xiv. ver. 3. of the 2d of Chron. and ch. xv. ver. 12. of the 1st of Kings. See Patrick's Comment.

the promises made to their forefathers, nor fall into despair from the apprehension that God had utterly forsaken them.

As long as Asa continued to rely on the LORD, he was blessed with prosperity; but we find his zeal abated, and instead of applying to God, as on a former occasion, he engaged the aid of the king of Syria, by means of some of the treasures of the House of God. In this Asa committed a great sin; for though, in cases of extreme necessity, the people of God were allowed to make use of things sacred for the defence of their country, they had no such pretence here. God had wonderfully protected them against the Ethiopian king, why, therefore, should Asa doubt the efficacy of the Divine power to overcome Baasha? Besides, it was an act unworthy of a king of Judah to bribe any one to break a league or covenant; and we learn that if he had not taken this step, the LORD would have delivered the Syrians into his hand: for in respect to the rise and fall of kingdoms, nothing happens by chance; *the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards him.*

The prophet Hanani was sent to reprove Asa: the king did not receive this prophet with thankfulness, as he ought to have done; but affronted the honour of the LORD, by behaving with cruelty to his servant, and proceeded to the oppression of his subjects also. Asa was, it seems, afflicted with a disease in his feet supposed to have been the gout; this made him fretful and impatient: but no excuse can be made for his distrusting God, and depending entirely on the physicians, because medicines can only prove efficacious through God's blessing: if we pray for that, we may hope for relief by the means God has graciously appointed, to ease our pains, and restore health to the body.

In one part of this section it is said, that *Asa's heart was perfect all his days*. We are not to understand from this, that he made no deviations from his duty: on the contrary, we find he committed great offences: this expression means only, that he never discovered any inclination to forsake the worship of the LORD, but continued, to the end of his life, to discountenance idolatry.

We are told that a great burning was made for Asa; by which is supposed to be meant, that he ordered his body to be burnt with spices and perfumes, and his bones and ashes to be collected and deposited in a sepulchre which he had provided, instead of being wrapped in grave clothes and buried entire, as the custom of the Jews then was.

SECTION LI.

THE REIGNS OF ELAH, ZIMRI, OMRI, AND TIBNI.

From 1 Kings, Chap. xvi.

IN the twenty and sixth year of Asa king of Judah, began Elah the son of Baasha to reign over Israel in Tirzah.

And his servant Zimri (captain of half his chariots) conspired against him as he was in Tirzah, drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza steward of his house in Tirzah.

And Zimri went and smote him, and killed him, in the twenty and seventh year of Asa king of Judah, and reigned in his stead.

Now the rest of the acts of Elah, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

And

And it came to pass when Zimri began to reign, as soon as he sat on the throne, he slew all the men of the house of Baasha, he left him not one either of his kinsfolk or of his friends.

Thus did Zimri destroy all the house of Baasha, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake against Baasha by Jehu the prophet ; For all the sins of Baasha, and the sins of Elah his son, by which they sinned, and by which they made Israel to sin, in provoking the LORD GOD of Israel to anger with their vanities.

In the twenty and seventh year of Asa king of Judah, did Zimri reign seven days in Tirzah : and the people were encamped against Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines.

And the people that were encamped heard say, Zimri hath conspired, and hath also slain the king : wherefore all Israel made Omri the captain of the host, king over Israel that day in the camp.

And Omri went up from Gibbethon, and all Israel with him, and they besieged Tirzah.

And it came to pass when Zimri saw that the city was taken, that he went into the palace of the king's house, and burnt the king's house over him with fire, and died, for his sins which he sinned in doing evil in the sight of the LORD, in walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did to make Israel sin.

Now the rest of the acts of Zimri, and his treason that he wrought, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel ?

Then were the people of Israel divided into two parts : half of the people followed Tibni the son of Ginath to make him king ; and half followed Omri.

But the people that followed Omri, prevailed against

the people that followed Tibni the son of Ginath : so Tibni died, and Omri reigned.

In the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah began Omri to reign over Israel twelve years : six years reigned he in Tirzah.

And he bought the hill Samaria of Shemer, for two talents of silver, and built on the hill, and called the name of the city which he built, after the name of Shemer, owner of the hill Samaria.

But Omri wrought evil in the eyes of the LORD, and did worse than all that were before him :

For he walked in all the ways of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin, to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger with their vanities.

So Omri slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria, and Ahab his son reigned in his stead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We here read that the threatening which the LORD had denounced by the prophet Jehu the son of Hanani, against the family of Baasha, *that they should be cut off like the house of Jeroboam*, was soon exactly fulfilled ; but Zimri, who destroyed them, imitated wicked Jeroboam in his idolatrous practices, for which his life and reign were shortened. Though he died by his own hand, he might still be said *to be cut off by the LORD*, because he would have been preserved from despair, if he had not given himself up to incorrigible wickedness.

It is said of Omri, that he did worse than all who were before him : from whence we may conjecture, that he introduced more abominable idolatries than even Jeroboam had done, and that by severe laws (called in
another

another part of Scripture *the statutes of Omri*) restrained the Israelites from going to Jerusalem to worship, and compelled them to worship the calves at Bethel and Dan, and perhaps other abominable idols also.

All the kings who had reigned over Israel, from the time of the division of the kingdom, were remarkable for their impiety.

SECTION LII.

THE BEGINNING OF THE REIGN OF JEHOSHAPHAT KING OF JUDAH.

From 2 Chronicles, Chap. xvii.

AND Jehoshaphat the son of Asa reigned in the stead of his father, and strengthened himself against Israel.

And he placed forces in all the fenced cities of Judah, and set garrisons in all the land of Judah, and in the cities of Ephraim which Asa his father had taken.

And the LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father Asa, and sought not unto Baalim ; But sought to the LORD GOD of his father David, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel.

Therefore the LORD established the kingdom in his hand ; and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat presents : and he had riches and honour in abundance.

And his heart was lifted up in the ways of the LORD : moreover, he took away the high places and groves out of Judah.

And Jehoshaphat waxed strong exceedingly : and he built in Judah castles, and cities of store.

And he had much business in the cities of Judah : and the men of war, mighty men of valour, were in Jerusalem.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Jehoshaphat seems to have been educated with great care, and to have received from his father, who at that time walked in the way of David, early impressions of piety. Jehoshaphat began his reign with that disposition of mind which his station required, and endeavoured to bring about a thorough reformation in Judah. He not only took away the high places, but *sent to his princes to teach in the cities of Judah, and with them he sent priests and Levites, who had the book of the law with them.*

It is supposed that the princes admonished the people, and required them to observe the LAW, which the priests and Levites came to explain; obliging them to treat those who were sent by the kings' command on so important an errand with respect, and hear them with attention. In those days there was, what is properly called by one of the prophets, a *spiritual famine* *. There were then no public synagogues, nor public teachers, as there were afterwards; and the people were fallen into such a state of general ignorance, that there was scarcely a copy of the law to be found in the whole country; for which reason it was thought advisable and necessary for the priests and Levites to carry one with them.

We read, that Jehoshaphat's subjects amounted to an astonishing number: his valiant men are computed at 1,100,000. His dominions included not only Judah and Benjamin (which were incorporated so as to become one tribe), but reached into the tribes of Dan, Ephraim, and Simeon, into Arabia, and the country of the Phi-

* Amos, chap. viii. 11.

listines: in a word from Beersheba to the mountains of Ephraim one way, from Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea another. The Levites also, whom Jeroboam thrust out, joined themselves to Judah; and multitudes of other persons, who abhorred idolatry, followed them from all parts of Israel. There were, besides, great numbers of foreigners in Judah; so that we may easily conceive Jehoshaphat's kingdom to have been as populous as it is here represented.

The great pains this good king took to propagate religion, not only procured him the favour of God, but gained the hearts of his subjects; and the Lord struck such a *dread* of him into his enemies, that instead of invading his dominions, the Philistines came voluntarily, and paid him a tribute which had been suspended for many years; and the Arabians also sent a great number of flocks and herds, as an acknowledgment of their homage.

We find that God *was perfectly true to his promises*; for whenever the king and people, either of Israel or Judah, were mindful of their duty, he blessed them with *prosperity*; and as constantly brought *adversity upon them*, when they *forsook his worship*: if they would but have been a *righteous* people, what happiness might they have enjoyed! what miseries would they have escaped!

SECTION LIII.

THE BEGINNING OF THE REIGN OF AHAB KING OF ISRAEL—AND OF THE HISTORY OF ELIJAH THE PROPHET.

From 1 Kings, Chap. xvi, xvii.

AND in the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, began Ahab the son of Omri to reign over Israel in Samaria.

And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, above all that were before him.

And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him.

And he reared up an altar for Baal, in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria.

And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD GOD of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.

In his days did Hiel the Beth elite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his first-born, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the LORD which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun.

And Elijah the Tishbite who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD GOD of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

And the word of the LORD came unto Elijah, saying, Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be that thou shalt drink of the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.

So he went, and did according unto the word of the LORD: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook.

And it came to pass after a while that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.

And Jezebel sent to destroy all the prophets in the land.

land. And Obadiah hid an hundred of them in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We find that there was at this time a great contrast between the *two* kingdoms: for whilst the king of Judah was using every means for *propagating true religion*, the king of Israel employed himself in *exalting idols*. Ahab not only continued the worship of the calves, which Jeroboam had set up, but he married Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of Tyre, whom he suffered to introduce new abominations; and to gratify her impiety, he built an altar to Baal in Israel.

That Ahab might not plead the example of his father, and pretend *ignorance* of the LORD, Elijah the prophet was graciously sent to warn and admonish him. Thesbe, the birth-place of this extraordinary person, was on the other side Jordan in the land of Gad. He is supposed to have been the *father* or *chief* of the prophets of that age, a man of a great and elevated soul, of a generous and undaunted spirit, a zealous defender of the laws of God, and a just avenger of a violation of His honour.

It was the LORD's will to send a famine on Israel; and that Ahab might not impute it to natural causes, Elijah was inspired to inform him, that it was inflicted by the hand of God, who withheld the usual refreshments from the earth for the wickedness of him and his people, and that the drought should continue.

As the LORD foresaw that the completion of this prediction would draw Ahab's resentment upon Elijah, in order to preserve this prophet from the cruel effects of the king's rage, and to shew his *almighty power*, He

M

commanded

commanded Elijah to retire to the brook Cherith, which was near the river Jordan.

If we had not been told that the LORD sent the ravens which fed Elijah, it would be quite astonishing to think, that creatures so voracious, and seemingly of such a cruel nature, should perform so kind an office; but with this explanation the wonder ceases, *for all things are possible to God.*

SECTION LIV.

ELIJAH AND THE WIDOW OF ZAREPHATH.

From 1 Kings, Chap. xvii.

AND the word of the LORD came unto Elijah, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there; behold I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.

So he arose, and went to Zarephath: and when he came to the gate of the city, behold the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.

And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand.

And she said, As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in, and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.

And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.

For

For thus saith the LORD GOD of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth.

And she went and did eat according to the saying of Elijah: and she and her house did eat many days.

And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD which he spake by Elijah.

And it came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick, and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him.

And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of GOD? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?

And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed.

And he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my GOD, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow, with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?

And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my GOD, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again.

And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah, and the soul of the child came into him again; and he revived.

And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth.

And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of GOD, and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The place to which Elijah was sent, was a city of Sidon, or Zidon. Our SAVIOUR Himself intimates, that there was something in the character of the widow of Zarephath, which rendered her an object of divine compassion, in preference to all the widows in Zidon*; and the Apostle to the Hebrews seems to refer to her as an example of *faith*†; we may therefore reasonably suppose, that it was for her sake, as well as his own, that the prophet was directed to go to Zidon.

Elijah had before given striking proofs that he had a stedfast faith in the power of God; and it must have influenced his conduct, when, in consequence of the Divine command, accompanied by a promise that he should be sustained there, he set off for Zarephath, a city in that very country which had given birth to the cruel queen from whose presence he was before commanded to flee, that he might frustrate her resentment, which burnt against him on account of his prediction; who, in consequence of its completion, had sought for him in every place where there was the least probability of finding him; and who would certainly have exerted her influence with her countrymen, either to execute her vengeance on one whom she regarded as her declared enemy, or to deliver him into her own hands.

This faith in the Divine promises must also have operated strongly in Elijah's mind, when knowing, by a Divine impulse, that the poor woman he saw picking up sticks was his intended benefactress, he applied to her for relief; for there could be nothing in her appearance, at that time, to encourage him to expect sustenance

* Luke iv. 25, 26.

† Heb. xi. 35.

from her hands ; on the contrary, he might rather have supposed, that she would have required a recompence from him.

As the ALMIGHTY, to whom all hearts are open, knows the good and bad qualites of *each*, and always chooses fit instruments to effect His purposes, and so orders events, that *moral virtues* shall conduce to their own *reward* as well as *vice* to its own *punishment*, we may reasonably infer, that this poor widow was of a very charitable disposition, and had in her better days delighted in acts of beneficence. Her readiness to fetch water for the prophet, before he had given any intimation of the LORD's intended kindness to her, proves that she was of this amiable temper ; for it was certainly a great instance of *charity* to attend to the necessities of *another*, when her *own* were so pressing ; when her mind was torn with a thousand anxieties for her only child. Thus far, the widow of Zarephath acted according to the rule of *right reason* and *genuine humanity*, and she must be allowed to have set a pattern worthy of the imitation even of Christians.

After having, with charitable readiness agreed to do for the stranger what was in her power, “ fetch him a little water to *allay his thirst*,” the widow of Zarephath modestly excused herself from giving him any farther relief, but in a manner which implied a tender commiseration of his distress, and a wish that her ability to serve him was greater. This is the very disposition of mind which God approves. This is the charity of the extreme indigent. She was a true object of Divine compassion, and the prophet was commissioned to relieve her from despondency by a Divine promise of miraculous interposition, to deliver her and her child from impending death. “ Fear not (said the holy man), the evil you dread will be averted. Thou mayest safely
indulge

indulge thy darling propensity to benevolence." *For thus saith the LORD GOD of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth.*

Convinced, by the conclusion of his speech, that the stranger was a messenger of the LORD (which she might before have guessed from his appearance), the good woman obeyed, without hesitation, in full confidence on the Divine promise. This was an act of *faith*, of a *rational faith* founded on the previous persuasion of the existence and the power of the LORD GOD *. The intercourse which the Sidonians had long had with the Israelites, had brought to her knowledge the name of the LORD JEHOVAH; and it is not improbable, that finding the incapacity of the idols of her own country to relieve their votaries, her heart turned from them to the *living GOD*, whom she might in secret have implored to be *her GOD*. Whether this conjecture be right or not, certain it is, that before the Divine message was delivered to her, she believed His existence; for she said to the prophet, "*As the LORD thy GOD liveth,*" &c. : and it is evident, that she believed GOD to be *a rewarder of them that serve and obey him*; for, without any information on this head from Elijah, she no sooner heard the divine promise, than she placed her whole trust in the LORD, and hastened to do honour to His prophet.

From one expression in the passage of Scripture we are considering, it may be supposed, that the LORD had by the *secret energy of His SPIRIT*, implanted faith in a supernatural way. "Get thee (said the LORD to Elijah) to Zarephath, for I have *commanded* a widow woman there to sustain thee." This certainly means no

* Heb. xi. 6.

more, than that the LORD had *ordained* that she should give him relief ; for it does not appear, from the history, that the woman was *prepared* by *Divine revelation* to expect the prophet, as the prophet was to expect her. The widow's faith therefore was not an *instantaneous irresistible Divine impulse*, but (as before observed) a *rational faith* and she testified this faith by *works of obedience*, and it was rewarded accordingly.

But it may be asked “ where was this faith when her son died, and she challenged the prophet as the author of her misfortune ? ” There is nothing in the history which implies that it had forsaken her, or that she meant to reproach Elijah ; on the contrary, we may infer, from her behaviour, that she believed the LORD to be *mighty to destroy* as well as *to save*.

For some time this woman had, through Divine goodness, lived in ease and abundance, happy in possessing the favour of GOD, and ministering to His prophet. It is likely that this prosperity might have occasioned her to be remiss in the practice of some duty, and when her darling son, who before was preserved to her by a miracle, was taken away by a sudden stroke of Providence, her conscience immediately suggested, that this calamity was a *judgment* inflicted for her sin ; and she regarded the prophet, who before had been the minister of good to her as the minister of Divine vengeance. *Art thou come unto me* (said she) *to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son ?* Her resigning the dead child to Elijah shewed, that she had hopes that he might yet be restored to her ; and, from an expression in the Epistle to the Hebrews (before alluded to *) we may judge that her child was restored to her on account of her faith in

* Heb. xi. 5

the *power* of God. And it is certain that Elijah himself exercised great *faith* on this occasion. It does not appear that he had received any intimation that the child would be restored to life, but he was confident the LORD *could* raise him, and in this confidence he prayed that He *would* do so. This was a *rational faith* in him who had already seen such wonderful miracles wrought by Divine power.

It has been repeatedly observed, that the nation of the Jews was not selected from the rest of the world, to confine the knowledge of the LORD to themselves only, or to exclude others from serving Him : but that, by the fame of the mighty works wrought among them, distant nations might be invited to seek the LORD ; and by the establishment of a pure and holy worship, all who were inclined might learn how to serve Him.

The king of Israel, in consequence of his marriage with the widow of a Zidonian monarch, had introduced the worship of Baal (the principal idol of the Zidonians) into Samaria, so that Baal may be regarded as the rival of the LORD GOD ; and it was on account of the king and people forsaking the LORD, and worshipping Baal, that the drought and consequent famine, which Elijah predicted, were sent upon the Israelites : it extended also, as we find, to the land of Zidon. Elijah was the person appointed to assert the honour of the LORD ; and it was a very remarkable instance of Providence, that he should be sent to Zidon, and that a woman of that country should have the honour of sustaining him. This circumstance helps to confirm the Apostle's declaration *, that *in every nation, those who fear God, and work righteousness, are accepted by him.*

* Acts x. 34, 35.

This transaction proves that GOD actually is, as the Scriptures represent Him to be a FATHER to the fatherless, and a HUSBAND to the widow ; and the relation of it must afford comfort to all persons in extreme necessity, since it proves, that no condition is so hopeless, but the Providence of GOD can afford relief.

It is scarcely possible for any person to be in more indigent circumstances than the poor widow of Zarephath. In losing her husband she seems to have been deprived of every earthly friend, and knew not where even to procure a little fuel to dress the last morsel of nourishment she had a prospect of obtaining for the sustenance of herself and child. She lived in a country where the inhabitants were so devoted to vice and sensuality as to be insensible, even in plentiful times, to the distresses of a fellow-creature ; for we find the heathen described by David, as *oppressing* the fatherless and widow ; and we may suppose them, during the famine, wholly intent on their own preservation.

This woman's *trial* was great, and great was also her *reward* ; for the LORD graciously made her a partaker of the miraculous support which he vouchsafed to his chosen servant ; and not only relieved the necessities of her and her child, but gave her an opportunity of exercising the benevolence of her mind, in doing good offices for a worthy friend. Elijah received great comfort from the conversation of this good woman, and no doubt rewarded her kindness by teaching her how to praise and adore their DIVINE BENEFACITOR.

It is true, we have no PROPHETS in these days, neither does the ALMIGHTY relieve our distresses by *supernatural* means ; but, to a considering mind, the *annual increase of corn*, from a *small* quantity of grain, is full as wonderful as the multiplying of the widow's meal and oil ; and we

we may daily hear of persons being relieved from distress by the most unexpected means. To a common eye, these things appear accidental ; but by the history of Elijah, and the widow of Zarephath, we are taught to ascribe them to the *goodness* of GOD ; since what He has done for ONE, we may conclude he will do for ALL *his creatures*, in some way or other, if they do not forfeit His mercy by mistrust and impiety.

This incident was also particularly calculated to encourage all those who should afterwards be employed, as Elijah was, in the immediate service of the LORD, to expect miraculous supplies in cases of extreme necessity and to admonish all others to treat the LORD's prophets with respect.

SECTION LV.

THE HISTORY OF AHAB KING OF ISRAEL CONTINUED—

BAAL'S PROPHETS SLAIN.

From 1 Kings, Chap. xviii.

AND it came to pass after many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go shew thyself to Ahab ; and I will send rain upon the earth.

And Elijah went to shew himself to Ahab : and there was a sore famine in Samaria.

And Ahab called Obadiah which was the governor of his house : (now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly.)

And Ahab said unto Obadiah, Go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks : peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive that we lose not all the beasts.

So they divided the land between them to pass throughout

throughout it : Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself.

And as Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him : and he knew him and fell on his face, and said, Art thou that my lord Elijah ? and he answered him, I am : go tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here.

And he said, What have I sinned, that thou wouldest deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me ? As the LORD thy GOD liveth, there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee : and when they said, He is not there : he took an oath of the kingdom and nation that they found thee not.

And now thou sayest, Go tell thy lord, behold, Elijah is here.

And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of the LORD shall carry thee whither I know not ; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me : but I thy servant fear the LORD from my youth.

Was is not told my lord, what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the LORD ? how I hid an hundred men of the LORD's prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water ?

And now thou sayest, Go tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah, is here : and he shall slay me.

And Elijah said, As the LORD of Hosts liveth before whom I stand, I will surely shew myself unto him to-day.

So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him : and Ahab went to meet Elijah.

And it came to pass when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel ?

And he answered, I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the command-

commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim.

Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table.

So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel.

And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be GOD, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men.

Let them therefore give us two bullocks, and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under:

And call ye on the name of your gods, And I will call on the name of the LORD: and the god that answereth by fire, let him be GOD. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.

And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you, one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many: and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under.

And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made.

And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god, either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.

And

And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives, and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.

And it came to pass when mid-day was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening-sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him: and he repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down.

And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the LORD came, saying, Israel shall be thy name.

And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed.

And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt-sacrifice, and on the wood.

And he said, Do it the second time: and they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time: and they did it the third time.

And the water ran down about the altar, and he filled the trench also with water.

And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, LORD GOD of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day, that thou art GOD in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word.

Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD GOD, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.

Then

Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, The LORD, He is the God; the LORD, He is the God.

And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal, let not one of them escape: and they took them, and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The famine must have been very grievous in the land of Israel, to make it necessary for the king to go himself in search of forage for the cattle.

Obadiah seems to have been a very religious man, and he had performed an action which testified his zeal for the LORD, as well as the humanity of his disposition.

The prophets whom Jezebel destroyed are supposed to have been persons who privately instructed those that were not worshippers of Baal in their duty to God, and encouraged them to the performance of it. They had not the *spirit of prophecy* like Elijah, nor did they offer sacrifices, or burn incense, but were most likely disciples (usually styled *sons*) of the prophets belonging to the schools, which Samuel is thought to have first instituted, and which, it is imagined, Jezebel intended to destroy.

It may seem strange, that so pious a man as Obadiah was, should be preferred to an high office by Ahab; but it is probable, that he was distinguished for his integrity and abilities, which made it the king's *interest* to employ him. We may conclude that Ahab had not compelled him to bow the knee to Baal: Obadiah therefore was under no necessity of declining the appointment; besides
he

he might hope, by continuing in his office, to be an instrument of good, in the hand of Providence, to the faithful servants of God, of whom there were still many remaining in the land of Israel. Indeed, we may venture to conclude, that the *DIVINE DISPOSER of all events* overruled Ahab, in raising the good Obadiah to this exalted station, for the very purpose of counteracting Jezebel's wicked scheme of extirpating all the prophets. It is true she put numbers to death ; but there is no doubt of God's having recompensed them for the loss of life in a better world : those who were left behind in such unsettled times were the most to be pitied ; but their preservation was necessary for the propagation of religion ; and they had reason to hope that, after a few more transient years, they should join their brethren in a happier state : for Solomon, and other inspired writers, had taught them this belief*.

It was in vain for Ahab to pursue Elijah ; the same Divine power, which was so miraculously exerted in sustaining him, prevented Ahab from discovering the place of his retreat. He was, without doubt, greatly surprised when he was told that Elijah, whom he had so lately sought, was coming to meet him. Though Ahab must have been an eye-witness of many unhappy consequences of the famine, they had made no proper impressions on his mind.

The priests of Baal amounted to a very considerable number : Ahab assembled them at Elijah's desire, in hopes, perhaps, that he should prevail on the prophet to bring rain on the earth. Elijah reproved the people for mixing the worship of God and the worship of Baal together. More than one GOD there could not possibly be, for this name is *sacred* or *set apart* for the SUPREME BEING, and when applied to any other is *profaned* ; the question there-

* Wisdom of Solomon, iii.

fore was, which was the CREATOR and UNIVERSAL LORD? If JEHOVAH, why did they put any one in competition with Him, since He alone could be worthy of their adoration? If that senseless idol Baal was *the* GOD, why did they derogate from his honour by dividing their services?

The Israelites, one would suppose, could not be ignorant of the *majesty* and *omnipotence* of the LORD JEHOVAH, which had been so frequently displayed to their forefathers, and even in their own days wonderful things had been wrought by his ALMIGHTY POWER: by forsaking his worship they provoked the LORD to destroy them; but, in remembrance of his *covenant* with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, GOD yet had compassion on their descendants, and on this occasion condescended to prove, in the manner related, that a vain idol was not worthy to be compared with Him.

The priests of Baal could not decline such a proposal as Elijah made to them, without disgracing themselves in the eyes of the king and people; and as they were numerous, and feared not the LORD, they thought to have had the advantage of Elijah, who had no one to join with him.

As the prophet could not bring the Israelites to the Temple at Jerusalem, he repaired the Altar of the LORD at Carmel: this Altar is supposed to have been one of those built in the time of the judges, when there were no houses for public worship. It is needless to give any farther explanation of this miracle, as so much has been said of former ones. We may suppose, that Ahab and all the worshippers of Baal were struck with consternation; therefore it was easy for the rest of the people to seize the idolatrous priests, and Elijah was fully justified in causing them to be put to death, especially as so many of
GOD's

God's servants, the prophets, had been slain by the command of Jezebel : besides, there was an express law*, that all those who attempted to draw the people away from the worship of the true and only God should be put to death. It is imagined, that the *prophets of the groves* (supposed to have been Sidonians) did not attend.

The words of Elijah to the people of Israel, *How long halt ye between two opinions ? If the LORD be GOD, follow Him ; and if Baal, follow him*, deserve to be seriously considered by us. As the LORD could not endure that the Israelites should divide their worship between Him and idols : neither will he endure that Christians should divide their love between him and the world, so as to suffer the world to draw them away from his worship, and occasion them to profane his sabbaths. Nor will the LORD approve of those worshippers who set up their own *Reason* as an idol, refusing to receive the truths of Divine Revelation, because they are in some instances above the comprehension of the human faculties†.

Let us then give to the LORD the honour due unto His name, not suffering any thing to draw our affections from Him, who is the author of all the good things that we enjoy ; but let us serve him sincerely, uniformly, and entirely, believing all He has revealed, and doing all that he has commanded.

* Dent. xiii. 1—11.

† See a discourse upon this text in the second volume of Sermons, published by the late Bishop of London, admirably suited to these times, in which many who call themselves Christians are partially so, both in respect to Faith and Obedience.

SECTION LVI.

CONTINUATION OF THE HISTORIES OF AHAB KING OF
ISRAEL, AND ELIJAH THE PROPHET.

From 1 Kings, Chap. xviii, xix.

AND Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink : for there is a sound of abundance of rain.

So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel ; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees, and said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times.

And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not.

And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel.

And the hand of the LORD was on Elijah : and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword.

Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them, by to-morrow about this time.

And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there.

But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper-tree: and he requested for himself that he might die, and said, It is enough, now, O LORD, take away my life: for I am not better than my fathers.

And as he lay and slept under a juniper-tree, behold then, an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat.

And he looked, and behold there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head: and he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.

And the angel of the LORD came down the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for thee.

And he arose, and did eat, and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights, unto Horeb the mount of GOD.

And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there: and behold, the WORD of the LORD came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?

And Elijah said, I have been very jealous for the LORD GOD of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away.

And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD: but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire, a still small voice.

And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the

entering in of the cave : and behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah ?

And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts : because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword ; and I, even I only am left ; and they seek my life, to take it away.

And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus : and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria.

And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel : and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.

And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay : and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu, shall Elisha slay.

Yet have I left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.

So he departed thence and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with the twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth : and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him.

And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again ; for what have I done to thee ?

And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat : then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It had been revealed to Elijah, and he had declared to Ahab, *that there should be neither dew nor rain for years, but according to his word*; by which was meant, that the desired blessings should follow the prophet's prayer, in order to gain him esteem, and to magnify his office, which at that time was greatly depreciated in the land of Israel. The prophet of the LORD could not, without dishonouring the DIVINE BEING, intercede for a nation of idolators; but as soon as Baal was disgraced, and the *majesty* of the LORD JEHOVAH vindicated, Elijah knew that his prayers would be accepted; he therefore immediately addressed himself to the ALMIGHTY GOD with the utmost earnestness of intercession, as we may judge by the humble posture he made use of, and his eagerness to know whether the LORD regarded his petitions. As soon as Elijah found that the blessing he prayed for was at hand, he not only dispatched his servant with a message to Ahab, but, to shew that he was far from being his enemy, and only desired that he would become a worshipper of the true God, the prophet girded up his vest, as was the custom when any one wanted to make expedition, and ran before the king like an humble attendant.

It seems inconsistent that Elijah, who had hitherto been sustained and protected by the miraculous power of God, and whose behaviour to Ahab was full of intrepidity, should be intimidated by the threatenings of the impious Jezebel. The extraordinary *courage* which he had before displayed was certainly inspired by the LORD; Elijah, when he was not under the influence of the HOLY SPIRIT, *was a man of like passions with ourselves*;* and perhaps he might have grown vain and arrogant, on

* James v. 17.

account of the miracles wrought for him, had not the LORD, to make him sensible of his natural weakness, *withdrawn* that courage with which he had hitherto fortified the mind of this prophet.

Elijah certainly was very impatient, but his trial was a great one ; for after the late memorable event he had reason to expect, that Ahab and the people would have returned to the worship of the true GOD, and honoured him as the prophet of the LORD : when he found the contrary he grew tired of his office, despaired of ever being serviceable to them, and seeing no chance of settling any where in peace and comfort, he wished to lay down his weary head in the grave ; but the LORD had compassion on his infirmities, and again restored his mind to tranquillity and confidence, by graciously sending an angel with food for his refreshment.

It is wonderful to observe, by what various means GOD sustained those *sacred* persons, who were set apart for the important purpose of calling others to righteousness ; but we are not to infer from this circumstance, that GOD was *partial* to them ; for, in order to convince the world that He was not so, they were exposed to a variety of distresses ; only GOD wrought their deliverance *openly*, and by *miraculous* means, to distinguish them as his servants, and to encourage their faith, instead of relieving them by the *ordinary* methods of Providence.

It appears astonishing, that Elijah should be supported for forty days by only two meals of bread and water ; but it is not at all *incredible*, since we are told they were sent by the great CREATOR. We can no otherwise account for our own bodies being nourished in the *usual* way, than by imputing it to the power of GOD, who can as easily make food efficacious for a longer, as a shorter time.

The mountain of Horeb, to which we may suppose the angel directed Elijah to go, was not above one hundred and fifty miles from Beersheba, so that if the prophet had travelled straight on, he might easily have reached it in a short time; but finding that he was sustained without food, as Moses had formerly been, he might think it his duty to remain there, till he received command from GOD to go to some other place.

Moses had a glorious vision of the LORD on this mountain; but on the present occasion GOD was pleased to reveal himself by *a small still voice*.

I think we may understand, that Elijah's zeal had lately transported him beyond proper bounds, and that he had wished for some sudden destruction on the land of Israel. To reprove him for this, perhaps, the LORD now taught him by external signs, that though He had all nature at his command, and could root out idolators at once, by a wind, an earthquake, or a fire, He was mercifully inclined to use lenity towards them; and as there were yet many who had not bowed the knee to Baal, He would for their sakes preserve the land; but that all who persisted in idolatry should be cut off at His appointed time by Hazael, Jehu, and Elisha.

Elisha, who was chosen to succeed Elijah, appears to have been a man of considerable property, (or he would not have been master of twelve yoke of oxen;) notwithstanding this, he willingly left the management of his farm, and from that day devoted himself entirely the service of GOD, and personal attendance upon the LORD's prophet.

Elijah did not proceed to Damascus to anoint Hazael; but we have no reason to suppose that this prophet, who was so zealous for the honour of the LORD, would *wilfully neglect* to obey the Divine command. It may then

be conjectured, that not being limited to any particular time for anointing Hazael and Jehu, he deferred it, in hopes that Ahab and his idolatrous people would repent; and that he was allowed to transfer the act to his successor in case they did not do so.

SECTION I.VI.

CONTINUATION OF THE HISTORY OF AHAB KING
OF ISRAEL.

From 1 Kings, Chap. xx.

AND Ben-hadad the king of Syria gathered all his host together, and there were thirty and two kings with him, and horses and chariots; and he went up and besieged Samaria, and warred against it.

And he sent messengers to Ahab king of Israel into the city, and said unto him, Thus saith Ben-hadad, Thy silver and thy gold is mine, thy wives also and thy children, even the goodliest are mine.

And the king of Israel answered and said, My lord, O king, according to thy saying, I am thine, and all that I have.

And the messengers came again, and said, Thus speaketh Ben-hadad, saying, Although I have sent unto thee, saying, Thou shalt deliver me thy silver and thy gold, and thy wives and thy children: yet I will send my servants unto thee to-morrow about this time, and they shall search thine house, and the houses of thy servants; and it shall be that whatsoever is pleasant in thine eyes, they shall put it in their hand, and take it away.

Then the king of Israel called all the elders of the land, and said, Mark, I pray you, and see how this man seeketh mischief: for he sent unto me for my wives,
and

and for my children, and for my silver, and for my gold, and I denied him not.

And all the elders, and all the people said unto him, Hearken not unto him, nor consent.

Wherefore he said unto the messengers of Ben-hadad, Tell my lord the king, All that thou didst send for to thy servant at the first, I will do : but this thing I may not do. And the messengers departed, and brought him word again.

And Ben-hadad sent unto him, and said, The gods do so unto me, and more also, if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls for all the people that follow me.

And the king of Israel answered and said, Tell him, Let not him that girdeth on his harness, boast himself as he that putteth it off.

And it came to pass when Ben-hadad heard this message (as he was drinking, he and the kings in the pavilions) that he said unto his servants, Set yourselves in array ; and they set themselves in array against the city.

And behold there came a prophet unto Ahab king of Israel, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou seen all this great multitude ? behold, I will deliver it into thine hand this day, and thou shalt know that I am the LORD.

And Ahab said, By whom ? And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Even by the young men of the princes of the provinces. Then he said, Who shall order the battle ? And he answered, Thou.

Then he numbered the young men of the princes of the provinces, and they were two hundred and thirty-two ; and after them he numbered all the people, even all the children of Israel, being seven thousand.

And they went out at noon ; but Ben-hadad was drinking himself drunk in the pavilions, he and the kings, the thirty and two kings that helped him.

And the young men of the princes of the provinces went out first, and Ben-hadad sent out, and they told him, saying, There are men come out of Samaria.

And he said, Whether they be come out for peace, take them alive : or whether they be come out for war, take them alive.

So these young men of the princes of the provinces came out of the city, and the army which followed them.

And they slew every one his man : and the Syrians fled, and Israel pursued them : and Ben-hadad the king of Syria escaped on an horse, with the horsemen.

And the king of Israel went out, and smote the horses and chariots, and slew the Syrians with a great slaughter.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Ben-hadad, the Syrian king who invaded Samaria, was the son of that monarch who was formerly hired by Asa king of Judah to make war upon Baasha king of Israel, from whom he took Ijon, Dan, Abel Maachah, Naphtali, and Chemosh. What was Benhadad's pretence for his invasion we are not informed ; Ahab was in no condition to oppose him, for he could not put confidence in Baal, whose impotence had been so lately exposed ; neither did he seek by repentance to regain the favour of the LORD ; his subjects were not very numerous, and he had no allies. Though the Syrians were totally subdued, and made tributary by David, God had, on account of Israel's apostasy, then suffered them to become formidable again.

We have read, that there were in Israel seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal ; for their sakes in particular, agreeable to the covenant with Jacob, God circumvented the designs of Ben-hadad, and prevented

prevented the ruin of Israel. We are not told the name of the prophet who came to Ahab on this occasion. Elijah was not employed in this instance ; it might be the LORD's pleasure to shew, that notwithstanding Jezebel's impious attempts to destroy *all* the prophets, there were still others remaining besides him, and likewise that it was the LORD himself, and not Elijah, who wrought the former miracles, which Ahab attributed to the art and malice of this prophet.

It appears likely, that Ahab, for some time after the slaughter of the heathen priests, forbore to sacrifice to Baal, and reposed confidence in the aid of the LORD JEHOVAH.

SECTION LVIII.

HISTORY OF AHAB CONTINUED—HIS INJUSTICE TO
NABOTH.

From 1 Kings, Chap. xx.

AFTER the victory related in the last section, the same prophet went to the king of Israel, and counselled him to strengthen himself against the return of the year ; because at that time the king of Syria would come up again.

The servants of Ben-hadad, on the other hand, had advised him to attack the Israelites in a different way ; because, said they, *Their Gods are Gods of the hills ; but let us fight them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they.* Ben-hadad followed this advice, and at the return of the year he went forth with an immense army which filled the country ; while the children of Israel pitched before them like two little flocks of sheep ; but the LORD sent a prophet to assure the king of Israel,

that because the Syrians had said, "*The LORD is God of the hills, but not of the vallies ;*" therefore He would deliver them into their hands. Thus encouraged, the Israelites risked a battle with their formidable enemies, and obtained a complete victory ; by which Ben-hadad was reduced to the utmost extremity. This proud king, relying on the mercy of the king of Israel, sent ambassadors to him, to beg his life ; Ahab inconsiderately spared Ben-hadad, and made a covenant with him, for which he was reproved by a prophet ; who told him, that because he had suffered a man to escape whom the LORD had doomed to utter destruction, his own life should go for the life of Ben-hadad, and his people for the people of Syria. Instead of triumphing for his memorable victory, or receiving the prophet's reproof with humility and contrition, Ahab returned to his house heavy and displeased, as if the SUPREME JUDGE of all men had been too severe in the sentence pronounced upon him.

The counsel which Ben-hadad's servants gave, in respect to fighting on a plain instead of a hill, shews us what absurd notions idolatrous nations entertained of their deities ; "that there were many gods who had each their particular charge or jurisdiction ; that some presided over whole countries, others over particular places, some over rivers, &c. As the Israelites sacrificed on *high places*, built their *temple* on a *hill*, and received their *law* on *Mount Sinai*, the Syrians supposed that JEHOVAH was a God of the hills." How much more *rational* is it to believe, as the *Scriptures* teach us, that the whole universe was created, and has ever been sustained and governed, by *one* SUPREME ALMIGHTY LORD, who knows all things, who is every where present, and will hear the prayers of those that call upon him faithfully,

fully, and will bless them for faith and obedience : who also overlooks the most secret designs of the wicked, and will punish them for sin. The Syrians were taught by their own defeat, that the LORD was God of the *plains* as well as of the *hills*, and able to put all those to confusion who trusted in vain idols.

How greatly was the impious king of Syria humbled by the LORD ! but Ahab's folly in not pursuing his conquest, and turning it to advantage, is quite amazing.

Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard contiguous to the king's palace, which Ahab was desirous of possessing; he therefore desired that Naboth would either sell it to him, or exchange it for another ; but Naboth refused to comply with the king's request, who was so enraged with him, that he returned to his house angry and disappointed, retired to his bed, and refused food. Jezebel understanding the cause of Ahab's uneasiness, reproached him with want of spirit : and obtaining from him the royal signet, engaged to put him in possession of the vineyard. In order to do so, she wrote letters in Ahab's name to the governors of the place where Naboth lived, to proclaim a fast ; as if they were apprehensive of an impending judgment from God on account of some concealed offender, which could only be averted by public humiliation, and the death of the impious wretch, who, like Achan, provoked the LORD to send a curse on the city. Those to whom the letters were addressed, were wicked enough to comply with the contents. Naboth was pointed out as the suspected person, and brought to the usual place of trial ; false witnesses were easily procured, who accused him of *blaspheming God and the king*. By the former crime, if it could be proved, his life was forfeited ; and by the latter, his estate was confiscated to the crown. Being furnished with no means
of

of defence, Naboth was convicted by his unjust judges, and condemned to be stoned to death. There is reason to believe, that his family were all destroyed likewise ; but, happily for them, their persecutors had no power over their souls ; we may therefore hope that the LORD, who suffered them to be cut off, removed them to a state of felicity, where their inheritance will remain secure to endless ages.

In order to understand the nature of Ahab's crime, in respect to Naboth's vineyard, it is necessary to mention a particular part of the Jewish law, of which it was a violation.

Amongst a variety of other commands which Moses received from God on mount Sinai, were some relating to the security of inheritances from one generation to another, agreeably to the first division of them, which was to be settled before the Israelites took entire possession of the land. The intent of these laws was to teach the Israelites to consider Canaan not as their own absolute right, but as a place *sacred* to the LORD, for the habitation of the people he had separated to himself ; and as the MESSIAH was to proceed from a particular tribe, it was necessary, in order to trace his genealogy, that all the tribes should remain unmixed ; and also that they should transmit their allotted portion to their descendants, lest some tribes should accumulate lands to the impoverishment of others ; but as God foresaw that occasions would arise, which would oblige many to sell their lands, in order to supply those wants which their own imprudence, or *Divine chastisement*, should reduce them to, He graciously ordained, for the sake of posterity, that none should be permitted to alienate his land to any but one of his own tribe ; nor for a longer term than forty-nine years, at which time it was to be restored, without expence, to the lawful heir.

Naboth

Naboth seems to have been in very good circumstances, and to have made it a point of conscience to preserve his portion entire for his children. Ahab, who was amply provided for, had no right to expect Naboth's compliance, especially as this king was an open idolator, and a contemner of all Divine institutions; which made it very unlikely that Naboth's posterity would be allowed to claim the restoration of their land at the appointed time, if it were annexed to the royal gardens.

It is probable, that Naboth was one of the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal; we can not therefore wonder at Jezebel's inveterate malice towards him, when we consider her character. Ahab testified his approbation of Jezebel's conduct in this shocking transaction, by which he made himself a partner in her guilt. He certainly must have known when she obtained his seal, that it was for some fatal purpose; and when she invited him to take possession of the vineyard, he would naturally suppose she had caused Naboth to be put to death; yet with savage joy he obeyed her summons, and went, it seems, triumphantly, as if it was justly forfeited to him by the crimes of the late possessor. Ahab was soon reminded that all his actions, and the wicked motives of them, were open to the eye of God, for the prophet Elijah was sent to accuse him for the murder of Naboth and his family on the very spot; and to denounce a sentence, which must have been particularly shocking to so proud a man; that the LORD would bring evil upon him, would cut off his posterity, and *that dogs should lick his blood*, in the place where Naboth was slain, and also that *dogs should eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel*. In hearing these evil tidings Ahab shewed great signs of repentance; he rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth, and humbled himself; and the LORD, on this account, was pleased to suspend the execution of

of it ; and had Ahab improved this blessed opportunity by continuing humble, and resolving to forsake his evil ways and root out idolatry, he would have been pardoned, and the curse entirely removed. This instance of *Divine forbearance* shews the great mercy and goodness of the SUPREME BEING, *who willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live.*

SECTION LIX.

THE REIGN OF AHAB KING OF ISRAEL CONCLUDED.

From 1 Kings, Chap. xxii.—2 Chron. Chap. xviii.

AND they continued three years without war between Syria and Israel.

And it came to pass in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel.

Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab.

(And the king of Israel said unto his servants, Know ye that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, and we be still, and take it not out of the hand of the king of Syria?) And he said unto Jehoshaphat, Wilt thou go with me to battle to Ramoth-gilead? And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses.

And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Enquire I pray thee, at the word of the LORD to day.

Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall I go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for the LORD shall deliver it into the hand of the king.

And

And Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might enquire of him? And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat. There is yet one man (Micaiah the son of Imlah) by whom we may enquire of the LORD; but I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so.

Then the king of Israel called an officer, and said Hasten hither Micaiah the son of Imlah.

And the king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, sat each on his throne, having put on their robes in a void place in the entrance of the gate of Samaria, and all the prophets prophesied before them.

And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made him horns of iron: and he said, Thus saith the LORD, with these shalt thou push the Syrians, until thou have consumed them.

And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramoth-gilead, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver it into the king's hand.

And the messenger that was gone to call Micaiah, spake unto him, saying, Behold now, the words of the prophets declare good unto the king with one mouth: let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good.

And Micaiah said, As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak.

So he came to the king, and the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we forbear? And he answered him, Go, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver it into the hand of the king.

And the king said unto him, How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but that which
is

is true in the name of the LORD? And Micaiah said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd. And the LORD said, These have no master: let them return every man to his house in peace.

And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee, that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil? And Micaiah said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him, on his right hand and on his left: And the LORD said, who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? and one said on this manner, and another said on that manner.

And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him.

And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? and he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so.

Now therefore behold, the LORD had put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee.

But Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near, and smote Micaiah on the cheek, and said, Which way went the Spirit of the LORD from me to speak unto thee?

And Micaiah said, Behold, thou shalt see in that day, when thou shalt go into an inner-chamber to hide thyself.

And the king of Israel said, Take Micaiah and carry him back unto Ammon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son; and say, Thus saith the king, Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction, and with water of affliction, until I come in peace.

And

And Micaiah said, If thou return at all in peace, the LORD hath not spoken by me. And he said, Hearken, O ye people, every one of you.

So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth-gilead.

And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself and enter into the battle, but put thou on thy robes. And the king of Israel disguised himself, and went into the battle.

But the king of Syria commanded his thirty-two captains that had rule over his chariots, saying, Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel.

And it came to pass when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, Surely, it is the king of Israel: therefore they compassed about him to fight: but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped him, and God moved them to depart from him.

And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots perceived that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him.

And a certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host: for I am wounded.

And the battle increased that day: and the king was stayed up in his chariot against the Syrians, and died at even: and the blood ran out of the wound into the midst of the chariot.

And there went a proclamation throughout the host about the going down of the sun, saying, Every man to his city, and every man to his own country.

So the king died, and was brought to Samaria, and they buried the king in Samaria.

And

And one washed the chariot in the pool of Samaria ; and the dogs licked up his blood ; and they washed his armour ; according unto the word of the LORD which he spake.

So Ahab slept with his fathers ; and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is probable that Jehoshaphat, when he went to visit Ahab, supposed him to have been reformed, and thought that it would be to the advantage of the kingdom of Judah, if he made an alliance with the king of Israel, as a means of producing harmony amongst those tribes who had been for some time estranged from each other ; and he planned a scheme for strengthening the connection by a marriage between his son and Ahab's daughter ; in this instance Jehoshaphat proceeded according to the rules of *worldly policy*, without consulting *the will of the LORD*, as he ought to have done ; but as he did it inconsiderately, and not presumptuously, he was only reproved for it, as we read afterwards.

When Ahab obtained his memorable victory over the Syrians, as related in a former Section, Ben-hadad entered into a covenant to restore all the cities which his father had formerly taken from the Israelites. Whether he performed any part of this engagement or not, is uncertain, but it is evident he did not completely fulfil it ; for Ramoth-gilead originally belonged to the tribe of Gad. Jehoshaphat too easily gave way to the benevolence of his disposition. We find, however, that he would not go out to battle till he had enquired *the will of the LORD* ; neither would he hearken to the false prophets, who assured Ahab of success. Zedekiah was a leading man amongst them, and to give force to his predictions, he made

made use of a sign in imitation of the practice of true prophets. By the horns of iron he meant to represent, that the Israelites should defeat the Syrians with irresistible force. Jehoshaphat was apprehensive of fallacy in these pretended prophets, and required more satisfactory encouragement before he would proceed to battle.

Micaiah's prophecy is not to be understood in a *literal* sense. The beginning of it is certainly ironical: "*Go and prosper, &c.*" (as much as to say, if you will suffer yourself to be deluded, you must take the consequences, for GOD will not restrain you by arbitrary means; and Ahab understood it so.) What followed were undoubtedly the *words of Divine inspiration*, and contained the prophet's *commission from the LORD* to foretell Ahab's death: "*I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, &c.*" the remainder appears to have been a kind of parable spoken by the prophet, for the admonition of Ahab and his people, for we must not suppose that he had *an actual view of the ALMIGHTY on the throne of heaven*. But in respect to such difficult passages as these, we can go no farther than *conjecture*, which should always be formed on some *clear* texts of Scripture. Now it may be proved *, from many places in the Bible, that God *hates* liars, and has declared he will cut them off; and that he has also commanded, that all false prophets should be put to death; so we may venture to conclude, that Micaiah, knowing by Divine inspiration that the LORD would make these lying priests instruments of punishment to Ahab for refusing to hear his servants, only endeavoured to give force to his exhortation by this familiar representation; which seems to have been suited to the conceptions which Ahab and his people entertained of the SUPREME BEING.

* See Essay for a New Translation.

It is not necessary for us to puzzle ourselves with attempting a farther explication of Micaiah's prophecy, as no *christian* will infer from it that the LORD *caused* these prophets to tell lies, and then *justified* them in it : neither could the *Israelites* have imagined so, if they had properly considered the ways of the LORD, whose *justice* was remarkably displayed even in the present instance. Had Ahab lent a willing ear to the Divine warning, he would not have gone on an expedition that was likely to prove fatal to him ; as he despised it, the LORD left him to the consequences of his presumption and impiety.

It is rather surprising that Jehoshaphat should go with Ahab, notwithstanding Micaiah's predictions ; perhaps he might think it right to keep his engagement, as the prophet had not forbidden him, and Ahab's fall only was predicted. Ahab seems to have gone into the field of battle with great apprehensions, and he strove to avoid his fate by disguising his person. Jehoshaphat's too easy compliance would in all probability have cost him his life, had he not in the instant of danger cried unto the LORD for help ; who knowing the good disposition of his heart, pardoned his errors, and protected him from the destroying sword.

Micaiah's prophesy was now in a great measure fulfilled ; for upon Ahab's death the *Israelites were scattered on the mountains of Gilead, like sheep having no shepherd* : we find Elijah's prediction accomplished also respecting the dogs licking the blood of this impious king.

The history of Ahab affords a variety of instruction concerning a *particular providence*, and the *justice of God's dealings with mankind* : we may infer, from many passages in it, that no events happen by *chance* ; blessings are undoubtedly *directed by the will of God*, and misfortunes can never happen without *DIVINE permission*. To the

the Supreme Disposer of all things we should be thankful for every circumstance of our felicity ; and to Him should we address our prayers for deliverance from danger, and for support in affliction.

SECTION LX.

THE CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF JEHOSEPHAT KING OF JUDAH.

From 2 Chron. Chap. xix.

AND Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned to his house at Jerusalem in peace.

And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD ? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD ?

Nevertheless, there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God.

And Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jeruslaem : and he went out again through the people, from Beer-sheba to mount Ephraim, and brought them back unto the LORD God of their fathers.

And he set judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city.

And said to the judges, Take heed what ye do : for ye judge not for man, but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgment.

Wherefore now let the fear of the LORD be upon you ; take heed, and do it : for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.

Moreover, in Jerusalem did Jehoshaphat set of the Levites,

Levites, and of the priests, and of the chief of the fathers of Israel, for the judgment of the LORD, and for controversies, when they returned to Jerusalem.

And he charged them, saying, Thus shall ye do in the fear of the LORD, faithfully, and with a perfect heart.

And what cause soever shall come to you of your brethren that dwell in their cities, between blood and blood, between law and commandment, statutes and judgments, ye shall even warn them that they trespass not against the LORD, and so wrath come upon you, and your brethren : this do, and ye shall not trespass.

And behold, Amariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of the LORD : and Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah, for all the king's matters : so the Levites shall be officers before you. Deal courageously, and the Lord shall be with the good.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It may be considered as a great instance of the mercy of God, that Jehoshaphat returned to his house in peace, from an expedition which he had so inconsiderately undertaken ; but we understand, that he did not entertain the least inclination for idolatry ; on the contrary, in the day of battle he put his whole trust and confidence in the LORD, and earnestly implored Divine assistance : he was, however, deserving of rebuke, and the prophet Jehu was graciously sent to shew him how he had exposed himself to the Divine displeasure.

Jehoshaphat did not, like Ahab, return to his house heavy and displeased at the admonition of the LORD ; he received it with becoming humility, and resolved to visit every part of his dominions, that he might personally exhort his subjects to live agreeably to the commands of God. Jehoshaphat had formerly sent preachers to in-
struct

struct the people, and he now appointed judges, whose business it was to punish the violators of the law, and decide controversies between man and man.

By the prophet's reproof to Jehoshaphat, we are taught to avoid the society of impious men, lest we encourage sin by appearing to countenance it, and endanger the corruption of our own principles.

We likewise learn, that God is not extreme to mark what we do amiss, and to punish for every offence; neither doth he withdraw his protection every time men forfeit it: we must not however presume on the forbearance of the LORD, but imitate the example of Jehoshaphat, who repented of his sin, and endeavoured to repair the injury he might have done by it to religion, or the souls of others.

The charge which Jehoshaphat gave to his judges, contains excellent instructions to all magistrates, teaching them to examine every cause that comes before them with caution and impartiality; to consider themselves as the ministers of God for the punishment of evil doers, and the protection of the innocent: and to remember that they ought, as far as the infirmities of human nature will permit, to imitate the ALMIGHTY in his administration of justice.

SECTION LXI.

JEHOSHAPHAT'S ALLIANCE WITH AHAZIAH.

From 2 Chron. Chap. xx.

AND after this did Jehoshaphat king of Judah join himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who did very wickedly: and he joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish: and they made the ships in Ezion-geber.

Then Eliezer the son of Dodavah of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the LORD hath broken thy works. And the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish.

Then said Ahaziah the son of Ahab unto Jehoshaphat, Let my servants go with thy servants in the ships. But Jehoshaphat would not.

There was then no king in Edom : a deputy was king.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It appears that Jehoshaphat still retained a kindness for Ahab's family ; and as his alliance with them by the marriage between his son and Ahab's daughter had (we may suppose) been a condition of their promoting each other's interest, this induced him to admit Ahaziah as a partner in the profitable trade which he carried on to Ophir : but as Jehoshaphat was very blameable in this particular, he was reprov'd and punished for it ; and warn'd, by the breaking of his ships, to break off his alliance with Ahaziah, and it seems he took the warning.

This section affords another instance of the great danger there is in forming connections and alliances with impious wicked persons.

SECTION LXII.

THE REIGN OF AHAZIAH KING OF ISRAEL.

From 1 Kings, Chap. xxii. 2 Kings, Chap. i.

AHAZIAH the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned two years over Israel.

And

And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin :

For he served Baal, and worshipped him, and provoked to anger the Lord God of Israel, according to all that his father had done.

Then Moab rebelled against Israel, after the death of Ahab.

And Ahaziah fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber that was in Samaria, and was sick ; and he sent messengers, and said unto them, Go enquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover of this disease.

But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, Go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say unto them, Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to enquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron ? Now therefore thus saith the LORD, Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. And Elijah departed.

And when the messengers turned back unto him, he said unto them, Why are ye now turned back ? And they said unto him, There came a man up to meet us, and said unto us, Go, turn again unto the king that sent you, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Is it not because there is not a God in Israel that thou sendest to enquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron ? therefore thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die.

And he said unto them, What manner of man was he which came up to meet you, and told you these words ? And they answered him, He was an hairy man, and girt

with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said, It is Elijah the Tishbite.

Then the king sent unto him a captain of fifty, with his fifty. And he went up to him. And behold, he sat on the top of an hill. And he spake unto him, Thou man of God, the king hath said, Come down.

And Elijah answered, and said to the captain of fifty, If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And there came down fire from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty.

Again also he sent unto him another captain of fifty, with his fifty. And he answered and said unto him, O man of God: thus hath the king said, Come down quickly.

And Elijah answered and said unto them, If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And the fire of God came down from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty.

And he sent again a captain of the third fifty, with his fifty. And the third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and besought him, and said unto him, O man of God, I pray thee, let my life, and the life of these fifty thy servants, be precious in thy sight.

Behold, there came down fire from heaven, and burned up the two captains of the former fifties, with their fifties: therefore let my life now be precious in thy sight.

And the angel of the Lord said unto Elijah, Go down with him; be not afraid of him. And he arose and went down with him unto the king.

And he said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Forasmuch as thou hast sent messengers to enquire of Baal-zebub

zebub the god of Ekron; is it not because there is no God in Israel to enquire of his word? therefore thou shalt not come down off that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die.

So he died according to the word of the LORD which Elijah had spoken. And Jehoram reigned in his stead, because Ahaziah had no son.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We read that king David gained a signal victory over the Moabites: this people continued in subjection to Solomon and Rehoboam; but after the revolt of the ten tribes, they became tributaries to the kings of Israel, though they had still kings of their own, but these were little better than viceroys. We are not told the exact time when they rebelled; but may conclude, that it was at the latter end of Ahaziah's reign, as we read of no battle fought at this period.

Though Ahaziah was the son of Ahab and Jezebel, and consequently must have had a very bad education; yet it might have been expected he would have taken warning from the destruction in which his father had been involved, by crediting the prophets of Baal; but instead of doing so, he followed the wicked example of his parents: however, he was soon stopt in his sinful career by a fatal accident. Baal-zebub, the name of the idol he sent to consult, signifies the *lord of flies*; given him, perhaps, on account of some deliverance the inhabitants of the place had received from a plague of flies, which they foolishly attributed to the power of this idol.

It was impossible for Ahaziah to dishonour the LORD JEHOVAH in a greater degree than he did by this action, and we must acknowledge the *justice* of the LORD in the

severe message he sent to him by his prophet; neither must we overlook the *mercy* of GOD in this instance, for there is the greatest reason to suppose, that though Ahaziah was threatened with death for sending to enquire of a dumb idol, yet if he had humbled himself, and sought the *living* GOD, the sentence might have been reversed; instead of doing so, he defied the LORD, and sent three different parties of soldiers to seize the prophet by violence, and bring him into his presence.

Ahaziah was well acquainted with the person of Elijah, and judged, from the description his messengers gave, that it was certainly he who sent them back. The captains who commanded the two first bands, seem to have had the same bad principles with their sovereign; for instead of addressing Elijah with reverence, they impiously presumed to command the servant of the LORD JEHOVAH to attend their wicked prince: this was such an open defiance of GOD, as called for immediate vengeance. We must not suppose that Elijah had the command of the elements, and could deal forth destruction according to his own will and pleasure on all who offended him by personal insults; neither would so good a man have taken such severe revenge for private injuries done to himself, because he would in such a case have acted contrary to his duty; but on this occasion he spake as the LORD inspired him, who caused him to pronounce those words before the judgment was inflicted, in order to prove that he was, as he professed to be, the man or *prophet of* GOD, who would not suffer his servants to be persecuted as such with impunity, since forbearance would have given room for idolators to triumph, and would have brought disgrace on true religion. In respect to these judgments, there was no cruelty; on the contrary, the captain who humbly deprecated the
wrath

wrath of God was spared, and Elijah was ordered to accompany him ; by which means this officer was secured from the punishment which the king would most likely have condemned him to, if he had returned without executing his royal commands.

Elijah did not endeavour to conceal himself from Ahaziah ; for repeated deliverances had taught him to repose confidence in the LORD ; neither did he seek to gain respect by his outward appearance ; for his best attire, as we may judge by the messenger's description, was a hairy garment, fastened with a leathern girdle ; yet, in this mean garb, how truly honourable was he ; enlightened by the HOLY SPIRIT, sustained by miracles, and commissioned to reprove kings !

Elijah did not enter the apartment of the monarch as a prisoner, but in the spirit and power of the LORD, boldly to perform the prophetic office, by declaring to Ahaziah's face, the sentence he had been commanded of God to pronounce upon him. The fear of the LORD fell on this wicked king and all present, which restrained them from offering violence to Elijah ; who soon saw the accomplishment of his prophecy in the death of Ahaziah, who reigned only two years.

SECTION LXIII.

THE TRANSLATION OF ELIJAH THE PROPHET.

From 2 Kings, Chap. ii.

AND it came to pass when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.

And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee : for the LORD hath sent me to Beth-el. And Elisha said

unto him, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Beth-el.

And the sons of the prophets that were at Beth-el came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to-day? and he said, Yea, I know it; hold you your peace.

And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho.

And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to-day? and he answered, Yea, I know it; hold you your peace.

And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the LORD hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on.

And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan.

And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.

And it came to pass when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.

And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so.

And it came to pass as they still went on, and talked, that behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of

of fire, and parted them both asunder: and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.

He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan, and he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the LORD GOD of Elijah? and when he had also smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over.

And when the sons of the prophets which were to view at Jericho saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him.

And they said unto him, Behold now, there be with thy servants fifty strong men; let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master; lest peradventure the spirit of the LORD hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley. And he said, Ye shall not send.

And when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, Send. They sent therefore fifty men; and they sought three days, but found him not.

And when they came again to him (for they tarried at Jericho) he said unto them, Did I not say unto you, Go not?

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It appears that the LORD had made known to Elijah, that he should soon be removed from this world; on which account he visited the sons of the prophets in their schools or colleges, in order to admonish, instruct,

and bless them, before his departure : the thoughts of losing the advantage of his direction and example must have filled them *all* with great concern ; but Elisha was particularly affected on this occasion, for he not only honoured Elijah on account of his high office, but also entertained great affection and esteem for him, as a man of singular virtue and piety, the loss of whose company he should most likely have daily cause to deplore ; he therefore resolved to attend him to the last, being desirous of receiving as much advantage as possible from his conversation ; for this reason he was displeased with the interruption of those, who could only tell him what he already knew to his sorrow.

Considering the great massacre which Jezebel had a few years before made of the prophets, it is suprising to read of there being such numbers of them at this period. But it was an act of God's particular providence " to preserve the schools,* where men were trained and employed in the exercises of religion and devotion, and to which good people resorted, to solemnize the appointed feasts with prayer and praises, when they had not conveniences for sacrifice or to incense, and were prevented from going to the Temple at Jerusalem : and thus religion was kept up in a time of general apostasy."

It is likely that those who stood to view afar off were desirous of attending Elijah ; but kept at a distance when they found that Elisha wished to be alone with his master : they were however sufficiently near to be eye witnesses of the event.

" It † may be supposed, that the dividing of the river Jordan was ordered of the LORD, for an assurance to Elijah, that He would as certainly translate him to a place

* Henry's Annotations.

† Ibid.

of happiness, as he had conducted the Israelites to the land of Canaan.

Elijah being pleased with the constancy of Elisha's affection and attendance, permitted him to ask what he should do for him. Elisha, knowing that he was anointed to succeed his master as *chief* or FATHER of the PROPHETS, earnestly desired to be eminently qualified for the important services he might be required to perform. He well knew that the HOLY SPIRIT, which inspired Elijah, was the gift of God, but begged for this prophet's *intercession with the LORD*, that he might have a *double portion* of it; for as Elijah had, in those intervals wherein he was *left to himself*, committed errors, Elisha wished to be *at all times* under the guidance of DIVINE DIRECTION, from an humble sense of the infirmities of his nature, and the expectation he had of great opposition from the impious king who at that time reigned over Israel. Elijah could not give his friend immediate satisfaction, but advised him to continue his attendance, that he might be prepared, and in a proper disposition of mind, to receive this distinguishing honour. He had asked a *hard thing*, what was indeed beyond this great prophet's power to bestow *as his own right*; all he could do was to entreat the LORD to transfer to his successor the inestimable gift he himself had so long enjoyed, in such a degree as should seem good to infinite wisdom. We may suppose, that Elijah spake *prophetically* when he told Elisha, that if he should *see* him when he was taken from him, he might consider this circumstance *as a sign* that the LORD would grant his desire. The event happened agreeably to his wishes. He saw his dear master taken up triumphantly to heaven: yet, "notwithstanding * he received the appointed token, that his request would be granted, he could not refrain

* Henry's Annotations.

his sorrow for his own and Israel's loss, but brake forth into pathetic lamentations: *My father! My father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!* Elisha considered himself as a fatherless child, thrown on the wide world, for Elijah had been the guide of his youth. The people of Israel had lost their best guard; for this prophet, by his counsel, reproofs, and prayers, and kept off the judgments of God, which their wickedness would otherwise have provoked; and was, on this account, better to them than the *strongest force of horses and chariots*: the departure therefore of this holy man was like the routing of an army, an irreparable loss."

The miraculous manner in which Elijah was taken from earth is very astonishing; and it is impossible to give a more satisfactory explanation of it than that which we find in the scriptures; because there is no accounting for it by *natural means*, as it was an extraordinary act of ALMIGHTY POWER, exerted for a *peculiar purpose*.

Numbers of the prophets had been *permitted* of God to come to untimely ends, which had given occasion to wicked men to exult over their survivors, and to dispute the power and goodness of the LORD, as he had not interposed to preserve his servants from the rage of their enemies. That remaining prophets might not be intimidated from discharging their duty, by the miserable fate of their predecessors, it pleased God to *convince* them, that there was another world, in which they would be secure from the persecutions of their enemies, and receive a recompence for all the sufferings they should endure on earth. Nothing could more effectually answer this purpose than the *visible* translation of Elijah; as it pointed out to the faithful, that those holy men, who went before, were exalted to a state of happiness, though their exaltation was not apparent to mortal eyes, because they

left

left their *bodies* behind them; but we may reasonably conjecture, (from many texts in scripture) that their deaths had been made easy to them by the comforts of the HOLY SPIRIT; and that their souls were honoured in the sight of *angels*, who conducted them to that paradise of rest, appointed by the SUPREME BEING, for those who by *patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and immortality*. If any one amongst the prophets deserved to be exempted from death *as a reward*, surely it was Elijah, who had so often boldly exposed his life in the discharge of the duties of his office. How his body was changed, and rendered fit for a celestial existence, is a vain enquiry, for it is impossible for us to know.

Elisha, when his transport of grief was over, clad himself in Elijah's mantle, which he received as a token of the descent of the HOLY SPIRIT upon him; and, willing to try whether he was also invested with the power of Elijah, he smote the waters of Jordan, earnestly seeking the aid of the LORD, and received the same favour as had been lately granted to his master. This miracle was a convincing proof to the sons of the prophets, who were spectators of it, that the Spirit which inspired Elijah did rest upon Elisha, and that he was entitled to the same respect as they had been accustomed to pay to his predecessor: and they readily submitted to him as their *chief* or *father*, which no doubt was a great encouragement to Elisha.

The proposal which the prophets made to search for Elijah, might proceed from their affection for him, which inclined them to hope that he would yet be restored to them; or they might think it necessary to make this search, in order to justify to the people their acceptance of Elisha in his stead. Elisha was at last *ashamed* to oppose them, lest he should be thought wanting in respect to his old master, or reluctant to resign his mantle.

Elijah

Elijah left this world in the beginning of the reign of Jehoram king of Israel.

SECTION LXIV.

ELISHA HEALETH THE WATERS OF JERICHO—THE
CHILDREN OF BETHEL SLAIN BY BEARS.

From 2 Kings, Chap. ii.

And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth : but the water is naught, and the ground barren.

And he said, bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought it to him.

And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters ; there shall not be from thence any more dearth, or barren land.

So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake.

And he went up from thence unto Bethel : and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up thou bald-head, go up thou bald-head.

And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the LORD. And there came forth two she-bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.

And he went from thence to mount Carmel ; and from thence he returned to Samaria.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Jericho * was the first city which the Israelites took,

* Sect. xxxviii. vol. ii.

after they passed the river Jordan. There is reason to suppose, that the inhabitants were incorrigibly wicked, for they were all *extirpated* by the command of the LORD, excepting Rahab the harlot, and her relations. The Israelites were strictly enjoined to destroy the city, and every thing in it, but the vessels of silver and gold, which were consecrated to the service of the tabernacle; and that the ruins of Jericho might remain as a monument of GOD's wrath against the Canaanites, and of his mercy to his chosen people, Joshua, in the name of the LORD, forbade them to *rebuild* it; assuring them that whoever should attempt it, *would lay the foundation in his first-born; and in his youngest son should he set up the gates of it.* This threatening (which implied that the whole posterity of the man who presumed to build on that spot should be cut off) was fulfilled in the days of Ahab king of Israel. Hiel*, one of the idolatrous inhabitants of the city of Bethel, in defiance of the curse well-known in Israel, began to build it. His eldest son died immediately; but Hiel proceeded in contempt of the Divine wrath, and gradually lost all his children, the youngest of whom was cut off just as he had completed his impious work. The blessing of the LORD was however denied to the city, till it pleased GOD to restore, by the hand of Elisha, wholesomeness to the water, and fertility to the soil, for the benefit of his servants the prophets, who had a school there.

After this acceptable service was performed for the city of Jericho, Elisha departed thence, in order to visit another school of the prophets at Bethel. In this city was one of the golden calves which Jeroboam set up as an object of worship; to which abominable idolatry the inhabitants of the place still adhered. There is reason to

* See Sect. xxxviii. vol. ii.

think, that they had received intimation of Elisha's approach, and regarding him as their professed adversary, resolved to treat him with derision and contempt. For this purpose they sent their *children*, or *young men**, to insult him, not merely as an old man, but as the servant of the LORD JEHOVAH. The indignity was not intended against Elisha alone: they did not only reflect upon his age, person, and character, by calling him BALD HEAD, but upon his master Elijah, and in him upon the service and servants of GOD, and even upon GOD Himself. For when they said Elisha, Go up, and repeated it, they meant to bid him ascend, as his master had done before him, who went up by a whirlwind into heaven. It is very likely, that these impious youths, who came forth out of the city and mocked, would have gone farther, and might have killed the good old man. We cannot wonder that Elisha was commanded to *curse* (or doom them to destruction) by the *authority of the LORD*; nor that so dreadful a judgment was inflicted on them; for the honour of GOD was concerned in the preservation of his holy prophet, and the punishment of such open insulters of his chosen servant.

Elisha, from every instance of his life which is recorded, appears to have been of a mild, benevolent disposition; from whence there is reason to conclude, that he would have forgiven any personal affront to himself; and we

* These comments on the death of the children of Bethel are taken from the vindication of Elisha's conduct towards them, which may be found in *Dr. Gregory Sharpe's Second Argument in Defence of Christianity, &c.* This learned author informs us, that the *Hebrew* word, here rendered LITTLE, is a general term for quantity or quality; which when applied to the offspring of men, does not always imply *little*, or *small in stature*, but is oftentimes used to distinguish them from the more *advanced in years*, as the *young* from the *old*. The other word *chiklren* is in very many places used for *young men* and *servants*.

cannot suppose that he would have been so severe as to have cursed a number of little boys and girls, who were playing innocently in the streets, merely for observing the naked appearance of his head, and desiring him to pass on, and not disturb their mirthful sport: though even *little children* would have been deserving of *rebuke* and *chastisement*, for such an expression, if their parents had taught them the reverence due to the *aged*; but if the inhabitants of Bethel brought up their children from their early infancy, to despise and scoff at the ministers of the LORD, they certainly provoked GOD to send judgment upon *themselves*: and no circumstance could have afflicted these sinners more than having their *little ones* torn to pieces by a furious wild beast, since even wicked persons usually love their offspring. As for the poor children, *death* could not be an *evil* to them in such a case, but a *mercy*, since it did but remove them from a world where they were devoted to *vice* and *impiety*, into a state of perfect happiness. So that, whether those who were slain by the bears were *young men* or *little children*, the justice of GOD clearly appears, and the prophet is vindicated from the imputation of cruelty. May the history of this dreadful visitation influence children and youths to regulate their own conduct by it, both in relation to the respect which it becomes them to pay to persons grown venerable by experience, and a good life; and to the reverence which is due towards the ministers of GOD!

SECTION LXV.

THE BEGINNING OF THE REIGN OF JEHORAM (CALLED ALSO JORAM) KING OF ISRAEL.

From 2 Kings, Chap. iii.

Now Jehoram the son of Ahab began to reign over
Israel

Israel in Samaria, in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah.

And he wrought evil in the sight of the LORD; but not like his father, and like his mother: for he put away the image of Baal that his father had made.

Nevertheless, he cleaved unto the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom:

And Mesha king of Moab was a sheep master, and rendered unto the king of Israel an hundred thousand lambs, and an hundred thousand rams with the wool.

But it came to pass when Ahab was dead, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.

And Jehoram sent to Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, saying, The king of Moab hath rebelled against me: wilt thou go with me against Moab to battle? and he said, I will go up: I am as thou art, my people as thy people, and my horses as thy horses.

And he said, Which way shall we go up? and he answered, The way through the wilderness of Edom.

So the king of Israel went, and the king of Judah, and the king of Edom, and they fetched a compass of seven days journey; and there was no water for the host, and for the cattle that followed them.

And the king of Israel said, Alas, that the LORD hath called these three kings together to deliver them into the hand of Moab.

But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the LORD, that we may enquire of the LORD by him? and one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah.

And Jehoshaphat said, The word of the LORD is with him. So the king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat, and the king of Edom, went down to him.

And

And Elisha said unto the king of Israel, What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother. And the king of Israel said unto him, Nay: for the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab.

And Elisha said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee.

But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him.

And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Make this valley full of ditches.

For thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain, yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye and your cattle, and your beasts.

And this is but a light thing in the sight of the LORD: he will deliver the Moabites also into your hand.

And he shall smite every fenced city and every choice city, and shall fell every good tree, and stop all wells of water, and mar every good piece of land with stones.

And it came to pass in the morning, when the meat-offering was offered, that behold there came water by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water.

And when all the Moabites heard that the kings were come up to fight against them, they gathered all that were able to put on armour, and upward, and stood in the border.

And they rose up early in the morning, and the sun shone upon the water, and the Moabites saw the water on the other side as red as blood;

And

And they said, This is blood : the kings are surely slain, and they have smitten one another : now therefore Moab, to the spoil.

And when they came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose up and smote the Moabites, so that they fled before them ; but they went forward smiting the Moabites, even in their country.

And they beat down the cities, and on every good piece of land cast every man his stone, and filled it : and they stopped all the wells of water, and felled all the good trees : only in Kir-haraseth left they the stones thereof ; howbeit, the slingers went about it, and smote it.

And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too sore for him, he took with him seven hundred men that drew swords to break through even unto the king of Edom : but they could not.

Then he took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt-offering upon the wall. And there was great indignation against Israel : and they departed from him, and returned to their own land.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The rebellion of the Moabites was mentioned in a former section ; but we do not find that Ahaziah made any attempt to reduce them, notwithstanding the tribute which the king of Moab paid was a considerable revenue to the crown. We may conclude, from the general tenour of Jehoshaphat's conduct, that he thought it his duty to assist the king of Israel in such a cause, as he had reason to think he had renounced idolatry. The king of Edom, whose aid he required, was no more than a deputy under him. The plan, which Jehoshaphat proposed, appeared a very politic one ; but the execution of it brought the

the three kings into such distress, as nothing but the providence of God could deliver them from. The king of Israel began to reproach the LORD as the author of their misfortune; but Jehoshaphat wisely and piously wished to enquire, by the mouth of some holy prophet, by what means they might be relieved in this unhappy situation, and whether the present enterprize was agreeable to the Divine will.

We may suppose that Elisha attended this tedious march by the appointment of God, that he might prove by his counsels and direction, *the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof*, as Elijah had formerly been*. It is likely that there were many in this combined army to whom the prophet was known, though he kept himself concealed from the kings, till they should wish for his presence.

Elisha knowing that Jehoram was not reformed, though he had with interested views put away the image of Baal; he beheld him with a holy indignation, which so much disturbed his mind, that he required a *musician* to be sent for; who, by playing on a harp, and singing psalms, calmed the tumult of his soul. From this circumstance we may judge, that it is proper for those who desire communion with God to keep their spirits quiet and serene, since they are not prepared even for prayer and praise till they can lift up their thoughts to heaven. Elisha was however guilty of no sin in his behaviour to Jehoram, as he kept his anger within due bounds, and dismissed it so soon.

The order which the prophet gave to the suppliant kings, to make the valley full of ditches, was to try their faith and obedience. The supply of water, he foretold, which could not come by natural means, was an earnest

* See Section lxii.

of the victory which was also promised. It is supposed that on this occasion the water miraculously sprang from some of the fountains of the great deep (the *ABYSS*, which is thought to be in the centre of the earth,) which, like *the waters above the firmament*, are under the controul and direction of the *GREAT CREATOR*.

It is observable, that this relief came just at the time of offering the morning sacrifice at the Temple in Jerusalem. There was in those days a fixed hour of prayer; and it seems to have been the custom of those amongst *GOD's* faithful people, who were at a distance from the Holy Altar, to present their petitions to the *ALMIGHTY* at the same hour; by which means they, in a *spiritual sense*, joined the congregation.

The Moabites knew the valley was a dry one, and as there had not been any rain, they had no thoughts of its being full of water; and as they were not only unjust in their revolt from Israel, but contemners of *GOD's* holy religion, they were permitted to *deceive themselves* to their destruction.

The action of the king of Moab, in sacrificing the eldest son of the king of Moab, fills us with horror*. It is supposed that he did it to obtain the favour of Chemosh, his idol.

SECTION LXVI.

THE CONCLUSION OF THE REIGN OF JEHOSHAPHAT
KING OF JUDAH.

From 2 Chronicles, Chap. xx.

It came to pass after this also, that the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them other besides the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle.

* See Amos Chap. ii. ver. 1.

Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea on this side Syria, and behold, they be in Hazazon-tamar, which is in En-gedi.

And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.

And Judah gathered themselves together to ask help of the LORD : even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD.

And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new court, and said, O LORD GOD of our fathers, art not thou GOD in heaven ; and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen ; and in thine hand is not their power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee ?

Art not thou our GOD, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever ? And they dwell therein, and have built thee a sanctuary therein for thy name, saying, If when evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name is in this house) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help ?

And now behold the children of Ammon, and Moab, and mount Seir, whom thou wouldest not let Israel invade when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not ; Behold, I say, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit.

O our GOD, wilt thou not judge them ? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us ; neither know we what to do ; but our eyes are upon thee.

And

And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives and their children.

Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, came the spirit of the LORD in the midst of the congregation : And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat. Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed, by reason of this great multitude ; for the battle is not yours but God's.

To-morrow go ye down against them ; behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz, and he shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel.

Ye shall not need to fight in this battle : set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem ; fear not, nor be dismayed to-morrow go out against them ; for the LORD will be with you.

And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground ; and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the LORD, worshipping the LORD.

And the Levites of the children of the Kohathites, and of the children of the Korhites, stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with a loud voice on high.

And they rose early in the morning, and went forth, into the wilderness of Tekoa : and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood, and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem ; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established ; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.

And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, that should praise the beauty of holiness as they went out before the army, and say, Praise the LORD ; for his mercy endureth for ever.

And

And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah ; and they were smitten.

For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them : and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir every one helped to destroy another.

And when Judah came toward the watch-tower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped.

And when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away the spoil of them, they found among them in abundance both riches with the dead bodies, and precious jewels, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away : and they were three days in gathering of the spoil : it was so much.

And on the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of Berachah : for there they blessed the LORD. Therefore the name of the same place was called, The valley of Berachah, unto this day.

Then they returned every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat in the fore-front of them, to go again to Jerusalem with joy : for the LORD had made them to rejoice over their enemies.

And they came to Jerusalem with psalteries, and harps, and trumpets, unto the house of the LORD.

And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of those countries, when they had heard that the LORD fought against the enemies of Israel.

So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet : for his God gave him rest round about.

And Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah : he was thirty

and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Azubah, the daughter of Shilhi.

And he walked in the way of Asa his father, and departed not from it, doing that which was right in the sight of the LORD.

Howbeit, the high places were not taken away; for as yet the people had not prepared their hearts unto the God of their fathers.

Now Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David. And Jehoram his son reigned in his stead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Before Jehoshaphat went with Jehoram king of Israel on the expedition against the Moabites, he had taken great pains for the reformation of his own people, and the due administration of justice in his kingdom: and we have reason to believe, that he renewed his attention to these important objects when he returned to Jerusalem, and it is likely, that he expected the usual blessings of peace and prosperity; but he was threatened with a powerful invasion from the Moabites, who in revenge for his assisting Jehoram, had collected a confederate army, and marched within a few miles of his capital before he had notice of their design. Jehoshaphat's conduct on this occasion was truly consistent with his duty as *king of Judah*; for he did not begin with warlike preparations, but was solicitous *first* to secure the favour of God by humiliation and prayer. The people readily assembled to join with him, earnestly seeking the aid of the LORD.

The prayer which Jehoshaphat offered up on this occasion

occasion, is deservedly accounted one of the most excellent in sacred history.* A gracious answer was sent by the prophet Jehaziel, and the king and people of Judah soon found, by joyful experience, how safe it was to put their whole trust and confidence in the salvation of the LORD, who certainly would not have permitted these haughty foes to invade His land, when the king was faithful, and the people obedient, if he had not intended to convince them, by a miraculous deliverance, that none should prevail against them if they believed his holy word, and served him with a willing mind.

It is supposed that the combined army was lying in ambush in different parts, to surprise the Israelites, when the LORD struck them with such terror and confusion, that they knew not friends from foes, but destroyed each other†.

It must have been a most transporting sight to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to behold Jehoshaphat and his troops return laden with costly spoils, triumphantly singing the praises of the LORD!

The honour which the king of Judah had lost in the eyes of the surrounding nations, by joining himself with Ahab and Ahaziah, was now restored, and peace, with all its train of blessings, crowned the end of his days.

Jehoshaphat himself continued stedfast in the service of GOD, and did every thing in his power to complete the reformation of his people. But though his authority obliged them to attend to the ordinances of religion, and they were on some occasions influenced by his exhortations and example, to turn to the LORD with sincerity, piety had not taken deep root in their hearts, or they certainly would have been solicitous to remove the high-places, and to serve GOD in a manner perfectly agreeable

* See Patrick's commentary.

† Ibid.

to his Divine laws ; as they had not only the Temple to resort to, but, in various places, priests and Levites to expound the law.

The good king Jehoshaphat certainly was one of the best monarchs that ever sat on the throne of Judah : he never discovered the least inclination to idolatry, nor do we read of his committing any sin as king of Israel, excepting that of forming alliances with the wicked kings of Israel, into which he seems to have fallen through the want of consideration, or a too ready desire of obliging others ; but the least remonstrance or reproof brought him to a sense of his duty, and he hastened to repent and regain the favour of God. Jehoshaphat's behaviour, in respect to the invasion of the Moabites abounds with instruction worthy of the attention of all the kings of the earth.

SECTION LXVII.

NAAMAN, THE SYRIAN GENERAL, CURED OF HIS LEPROSY BY ELISHA.

From 2 Kings, Chap. v.

Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable ; because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria : he was also a mighty man in valour ; but he was a leper.

And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid ; and she waited on Naaman's wife.

And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria ! for he would recover him of his leprosy.

And

And one went in and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel.

And the king of Syria said, Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. And Naaman departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment.

And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have therewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy.

And it came to pass when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me.

And it was so, when Elisha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.

So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha.

And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.

But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.

Are not Abana and Pharphar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.

And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said,

said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?

Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came and stood before him: and he said, Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel: now therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant.

But he said, As the LORD liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take it; but he refused.

And Naaman said, Shall there not then, I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules burden of earth? for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt-offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the LORD.

In this thing the LORD pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon thy servant in this thing.

And he said unto him, Go in peace. So he departed from him a little way.

But Gehazi the servant of Elisha the man of God said, Behold my master hath spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought: but as the LORD liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him.

So Gehazi followed after Naaman: and when Naaman saw him running after him, he lighted down from the chariot to meet him, and said, Is all well?

And

And he said, All is well. My master hath sent me, saying, Behold, even now there be come to me from mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets : give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver and two changes of garments.

And Naaman said, Be content, take two talents. And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and laid them upon two of his servants, and they bare them before him.

And when he came to the tower; he took them from their hand, and bestowed them in the house : and he let the men go, and they departed.

But he went in, and stood before his master : and Elisha said unto him, Whence comest thou, Gehazi ? And he said, Thy servant went no whither.

And he said unto him, Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee ? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and men servants, and maid servants ?

The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Naaman is supposed to have been the general who commanded in that memorable battle in which Ahab king of Israel was slain. The little maid who waited upon Naaman's wife, was a servant of the true God, and zealous to make his glory known. Naaman gave a ready ear to his servant's relation of the wonderful miracles wrought by the hand of Elisha ; but before he went to seek for a cure in an enemy's country, it was

requisite that he should gain permission from his own sovereign. The king of Syria, to do honour to his general, gave him a letter; but too proud to address himself to Elisha, thinking that the king could command the prophet to exert his skill in Naaman's favour, he addressed his letter to Jehoram.

Elisha, though at some distance from the king of Israel, knew by a Divine impulse what was transacting, and that the LORD would cure Naaman; it was in consequence of his being divinely inspired, that Elisha sent to Jehoram.

Naaman doubtless expected to be treated by the prophet with distinction, suitable to the pomp and grandeur of his retinue, and thought it a contempt put upon the rivers of Syria, when Elisha ordered him to dip seven times in Jordan. However, when he had made the experiment, Naaman was convinced of the power of God, and felt the highest esteem and gratitude for his prophet. He desired to carry some of the earth of the land of Israel with him, either because he thought to make an altar of it, or with a view to erect a monument in memory of his astonishing cure. Why his request was refused, we are not told. The Syrian general now repented that he had ever entered a temple dedicated to an idol.

Some of the learned are of opinion, that the text respecting *Naaman's bowing himself in the house of Rimmon*, should have been rendered as follows: *In this thing the LORD pardon thy servant, that when my master WENT into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and HE LEANED on my hand, and I BOWED myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon thy servant in this thing: that I BOWED myself in the house of Rimmon.* It is observed, that this construction seems best to agree with the rest of Naaman's discourse; may it not therefore

fore be inferred from it, that this general never went by *choice* into the idol's temple, but worshipped in *private* the *unknown* GOD; who, as a reward for his good intentions, *revealed* himself to him in so gracious and wonderful a manner?

As this was an affair in which the honour of GOD was concerned, the LORD revealed to Elisha what Gehazi had done. This wicked servant was soon convinced that the HOLY GOD, whose Spirit inspired Elisha, could not be deceived; and that "those who get wealth by fraud and injustice, cannot expect either the comfort or continuance of it.

"The general instruction that may be collected from the history of Naaman, is this, that no state of life is exempt from misfortune: and that what we esteem the severest calamities, are often productive of the greatest benefits. Had Naaman enjoyed health, as well as honour and success; had he had nothing to divide his attention but the triumphs of the field and the pleasures of the court, he might indeed have continued a favourite with his prince, and an idol of the people; but he would ever have remained a stranger to his GOD.

"There is nothing but religion that can make us truly honourable: nothing but the favour of the SUPREME BEING that can make us truly happy."

SECTION LXVIII.

THE CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF JEHORAM (OR JORAM) KING OF ISRAEL.

From 2 Kings, Chap. vi.

THEN the king of Syria warred against Israel and took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such place shall be my camp.

And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place ; for thither the Syrians are come down.

And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there not once nor twice.

Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing : and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Israel ?

And one of the servants said, None, my lord, O king : but Elisha the prophet, that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bed-chamber.

And he said, Go, and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan.

Therefore sent he thither horses and chariots, and a great host : and they came by night and compassed the city about.

And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold an host encompassed the city, both horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master ! how shall we do ?

And he answered, Fear not : for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man : and he saw : and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the LORD, and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness. And he smote them with blindness, according the word of Elisha.

And

And Elisha said unto them, This is not the way, neither is this the city, follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek. But he led them to Samaria.

And it came to pass when they were come into Samaria, that Elisha said, LORD, open the eyes of these men that they may see. And the LORD opened their eyes, and they saw; and behold they were in the midst of Samaria.

And the king of Israel said unto Elisha, when he saw them, My father shall I smite them; shall I smite them? and he answered, Thou shalt not smite them: wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow? Set bread and water before them that they may eat and drink, and go to their master.

And he prepared great provision for them: and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

There is reason to suppose that Naaman was removed from the command of the army, either for refusing to attend his sovereign into the temple of Rimmon, or from a suspicion that he would favour a people, in whose land he had received so extraordinary a mercy. The fame of Elisha was doubtless spread amongst the Syrians by Naaman, and those who had been witnesses of his cure; and it was natural for them to imagine, that this prophet was endued with such a degree of knowledge as to be able to disconcert all the secret designs of Ben-hadad.

Elisha at this time resided at Dothan, which was not far from Samaria. Though he knew by Divine inspira-

tion, that the king of Syria was resolved to seize him, and had sent out a great army to encompass the city, Elisha continued quite calm and serene, knowing that he was guarded by that heavenly host who, we are told in Scripture, *encamp about those that fear the LORD to deliver them* *. Mortal eyes, indeed, cannot behold these heavenly guardians, unless opened by the miraculous power of God, as in the case of Elisha and his servant; but as it is recorded in holy writ that they have been made visible to such chosen witnesses, we may safely believe the truth of their existence and ministry.

The same Almighty Being who enlightened the eyes of the prophet and his attendant, darkened those of Ben-hadad's army: not that they were seized with actual blindness, but their senses and understandings were so confused, that they were unable to distinguish one thing from another. These persons had received command to go *to the city where Elisha was*, not merely to Dothan, but without doubt to pursue him if he should escape to another place: the prophet therefore told them no *falsity*, when he said *that was NOT the city*, because he whom they sought was not then in it; and as the event proves that he had no ill design against them, he is acquitted of sin in leading them out to Samaria: if he had commanded the inhabitants to put them to the sword, he might perhaps have been accused of treachery; though the practice of all nations towards their enemies, will justify his policy in thus deluding those who came with a design to destroy *him*, as a preparation to the destruction of *his country*.

It must have greatly surprised the king of Israel, to behold the Syrian host thus conducted by Elisha into the midst of his capital; but as he perceived it was

* Psalm xxxiv. 7.

miraculous, he restrained his desire of cutting them off, and considering the prophet as his father and protector, he gladly submitted to his direction.

Thus Elisha, by the providence of God, gained a glorious triumph over his persecutors, and employed his advantage even like a *christian*. His behaviour had a natural tendency to turn their hatred against Israel into esteem, and to convert them to the worship of Israel's God. And it answered the purpose of putting an end to the intended war; for Ben-hadad was intimidated from pursuing his design, and made no more attempts to seize the person of Elisha in the land of Israel.

SECTION LXIX.

THE CONTINUATION OF THE HISTORY OF JEHORAM
(OR JORAM) KING OF ISRAEL.

From 2 Kings, Chap. vi, vii.

AND it came to pass after this, that Ben-hadad king of Syria gathered all his hosts, and went up and besieged Samaria.

And there was a great famine in Samaria: and behold, they besieged it until an ass's head was sold for four-score pieces of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five pieces of silver.

And as the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him saying, Help, my lord, O king.

And he said, If the LORD do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? out of the barn floor, or out of the wine-press? And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to-day, and we will eat my son to-morrow.

So

So we boiled my son, and did eat him: and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son.

And it came to pass when the king heard the words of the woman, that he rent his clothes; and he passed by upon the wall, and the people looked, and behold he had sackcloth within upon his flesh.

Then he said, God do so, and more also to me, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stand on him this day.

But Elisha sat in his house; and the elders sat with him: and the king sent a man from before him: but ere the messenger came to him, Elisha said to the elders, See ye how this son of a murderer hath sent to take away mine head! look, when the messenger cometh shut the door, and hold him fast at the door: is not the sound of his master's feet behind him?

And while he yet talked with them, behold the messenger came down unto him: and he said, Behold this evil is of the LORD: what! should I wait for the LORD any longer?

Then Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the LORD; thus saith the LORD, To-morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.

Then a lord, on whose hand the king leaned, answered the man of God, and said, Behold if the LORD would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.

And there were four leprous men at the entering in at the gate; and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die? If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there:

and

and if we sit here, we die also. Now therefore come, let us fall unto the host of the Syrians : and if they save us alive, we shall live : and if they kill us, we shall but die.

And they rose up in the twilight to go unto the camp of the Syrians : and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, there was no man there :

For the LORD had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host : and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians to come upon us.

Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp, as it was, and fled for their life.

And when these lepers came to the uttermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver and gold, and raiment, and went and hid it ; and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried thence, also, and went and hid it.

Then they said one to another, We do not well : this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace ; if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us : now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household.

So they came, and called unto the porter of the city : and they told them, saying, We came to the camp of the Syrians, and behold, there was no man there, neither voice of man, but horses tied, and asses tied, and the tents as they were.

And he called the porters ; and they told it to the king's house within.

And

And the king arose in the night, and said unto his servants, I will now shew you what the Syrians have done to us. They know that we be hungry; therefore are they gone out of the camp, to hide themselves in the field, saying, When they come out of the city, we shall catch them alive, and get into the city.

And one of his servants answered and said, Let some take, I pray thee, five of the horses that remain, which are left in the city, (behold they are as all the multitude of Israel that are left in it: behold, I say, they are even as all the multitude of the Israelites that are consumed) and let us send and see.

They took therefore two chariot horses, and the king sent after the host of the Syrians saying, Go, and see.

And they went after them unto Jordan: and lo, all the way was full of garments and vessels, which the Syrians had cast away in their haste. And the messengers returned and told the king.

And the people went out, and spoiled the tents of the Syrians. So a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the LORD.

And the king appointed the lord on whose hand he leaned to have the charge of the gate: and the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died, as the man of God had said, who spake when the king came down to him.

And it came to pass as the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, Two measures of barley for a shekel, and a measure of fine flour for a shekel, shall be tomorrow about this time in the gate of Samaria:

And that lord answered the man of God, and said, Now behold, if the LORD should make windows in heaven,

ven, might such a thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.

And so it fell out unto him: for the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The inhabitants of Samaria were reduced to the utmost extremity of want, as we may judge from their paying the value of five pounds for an ass's head, and to the amount of twelve or fifteen shillings for about three English pints of a coarse kind of corn or pulse, known then by the name of *dove's dung*, which perhaps it resembled in appearance; but we may form a juster idea of the miserable state of the Samaritans, from the shocking circumstance of a woman's eating her own child. Jehoram, though he appears to have been moved with compassion by this incident, was not properly affected with the judgment which the LORD had caused to fall on his kingdom. He did indeed, in compliance with the usual custom, in times of public calamity, put sackcloth upon his flesh; but he did not, as the good Jehoshaphat had done, endeavour to gain pardon from the SUPREME BEING, by a general fast and humiliation; neither did he destroy the idols which still remained in the land of Israel. So far from having recourse to the prophet for his intercession with the LORD, the king vehemently protested that he would immediately put Elisha to death, as the cause of all this distress, repenting that he had followed his advice the preceding year, in sparing the Syrian army, when he had them in his power. It appears that Elisha was in expectation of directions from the LORD, what to say to the king of Israel; but as he did not receive any, and the case was perfectly clear to him, he thought he might venture, without

without immediate inspiration, to declare to the king's messenger, that he was not the author of the calamity, for *the thing was from the LORD*. Elisha appears to have been inspired by the Holy Spirit immediately on the arrival of the king's messenger, for he addressed himself to him in that solemn form of words which prophets made use of as an introduction to their predictions when they spake by Divine authority: *Hear ye the word of the LORD! Thus saith the LORD!*

It is needless to enlarge on the miraculous deliverance which it pleased GOD to grant to the Samaritans, because we have had occasion to consider others of a similar nature. The terror of the Syrians was caused by some supernatural noise, which we cannot possibly describe; and therefore it is best not to indulge our minds in fruitless conjectures, on a point of no immediate concern to us. We must, however, remark the wonderful deliverance of the lepers, and the importance of their intelligence. They were cast out and left by their countrymen to perish, because they were considered as *useless*, and infectious; but the LORD, whose mercy is over all his works, took compassion on these miserable creatures, and made them instrumental to the relief of those who had despised them.

We may understand from the king's suspicions of a stratagem to betray the city, that he did not believe the prediction of the prophet, otherwise he would have acted as Jehoshaphat did, when the Moabites invaded Judah. It appears that the Samaritans had been under the necessity either of starving their horses for want of forage, or of eating them to satisfy their hunger; and that there were no more than five left in the city, two only of which were able to go out to the Syrian camp. It was not for the righteousness of the king, or the people

ple in general, but for the sake of God's faithful servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and in remembrance of his covenant that Israel was delivered. The proud nobleman, who disbelieved the word of the Lord, had reason to repent his infidelity. God's justice was glorified, and the prediction of Elisha was fulfilled, for the nobleman saw the plenty, but did not live to taste it.

Though the city of Samaria, which had been so particularly distressed, was plentifully relieved, there seems to have been a general scarcity in the land of Israel; for we are told of a famine which lasted seven years: and there is reason to suppose, that Ben-hadad was permitted of the Lord to besiege the capital city at this time, in order to humble Jehoram, and bring him to a sense of his crimes, that he might put away idols, and use his endeavours to reform his people from those sins for which the famine was inflicted. We have an account of several miracles performed through Elisha, most of which seem to have been wrought in this time of scarcity.

SECTION LXX.

THE WIDOW'S OIL MULTIPLIED, AND OTHER MIRACLES.

From 2 Kings, Chap. iv. vi. and viii.

Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, 'Thy servant my husband is dead: and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the Lord; and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen.

And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me: what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house save a pot of oil.

Then

Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours even empty vessels ; borrow not a few.

And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shall pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full.

So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and upon her sons, who brought the vessels to her, and she poured out.

And it came to pass when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed.

Then she came and told the man of God : and he said Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest.

And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunam, where was a great woman : and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, that, as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread.

And she said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God which passeth by us continually.

Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall ; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool and a candlestick : and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither.

And it fell on a day that he came thither, and he turned into the chamber, and lay there.

And he said to Gehazi his servant, Call this Shunammite. And when he had called her, she stood before him.

And he said unto him, Say now unto her, Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care ; what is to be done for thee ? wouldest thou be spoken for to the king or to the captain of the host ? And he answered, I dwell among mine own people.

And

And he said, What then is to be done for her? And Gehazi answered, Verily she hath no child, and her husband is old.

And he said, Call her. And when he had called her, she stood in the door.

And he said, About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son. And she said, Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid.

And the woman conceived, and bare a son at that season that Elisha had said unto her, according to the time of life.

And when the child was grown, it fell on a day that he went out to his father to the reapers.

And he said unto his father, My head, my head. And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother.

And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died.

And she went up, and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door upon him, and went out.

And she called unto her husband, and said, Send me, I pray thee one of the young men, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God, and come again.

And he said, Wherefore wilt thou go to him to-day! it is neither new moon nor sabbath. And she said, It shall be well.

Then she saddled an ass, and said to her servant, Drive and go forward; slack not thy riding for me, except I bid thee.

So she went and came unto the man of God to mount Carmel. And it came to pass, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to Gehazi his servant, Behold, yonder is that Shunammite:

Run now, I pray thee, to meet her; and say unto her,

Is

Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well.

And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught him by the feet: but Gehazi came near to thrust her away. And the man of God said, Let her alone; for her soul is vexed within her: and the LORD hath hid it from me, and hath not told me.

Then she said, Did I desire a son of my lord? did I not say, Do not deceive me?

Then he said to Gehazi, Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thine hand, and go thy way: if thou meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute thee, answer him not again: and lay my staff upon the face of the child.

And the mother of the child said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And he arose, and followed her.

And Gehazi passed on before them, and laid the staff upon the face of the child; but there was neither voice nor hearing: wherefore he went again to meet him, and told him, saying, The child is not awaked.

And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed.

He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the LORD.

And he went up and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands, and he stretched himself upon the child, and the flesh of the child waxed warm.

Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes.

And he called Gehazi, and said, Call this Shunammite. So he called her: and when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up thy son.

Then

Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out.

Then spake Elisha unto the woman, whose son he had restored to life, saying, Arise, and go thou and thine household, and sojourn wheresoever thou canst sojourn: for the LORD hath called for a famine; and it shall also come upon the land seven years.

And the woman arose, and did after the saying of the man of GOD: and she went with her household, and sojourned in the land of the Philistines seven years.

And it came to pass at the seven years end, that the woman returned out of the land of the Philistines: and she went forth to cry unto the king for her house and for her land.

And the king talked with Gehazi the servant of the man of GOD, saying, Tell me, I pray thee, all the great things that Elisha hath done.

And it came to pass, as he was telling the king how he had restored a dead body to life, that, behold, the woman, whose son he had restored to life, cried to the king for her house and for her land. And Gehazi said, My lord, O king, this is the woman, and this is her son, whom Elisha restored to life.

And when the king asked the woman, she told him. So the king appointed unto her a certain officer, saying, Restore all that was her's, and all the fruits of the field since the day that she left the land, even until now.

And Elisha came again to Gilgal; and there was a dearth in the land, and the sons of the prophets were sitting before him; and he said unto his servant, Set on the great pot, and seethe pottage for the sons of the prophets.

And one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered thereof wild gourds his lap

lap full, and came and shred them into the pot of pottage : for they knew them not.

So they poured out for the men to eat : and it came to pass, as they were eating of the pottage, that they cried out, and said, O thou man of God, there is death in the pot ; and they could not eat thereof.

But he said, Then bring meal : and he cast it into the pot ; and he said, Pour out for the people, that they may eat : and there was no harm in the pot.

And there came a man from Baalshalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the first fruits, twenty loaves of barley, and full ears of corn in the husk thereof : and he said, Give unto the people, that they may eat.

And his servitor said, What ! should I set this before an hundred men ? He said again, Give the people, that they may eat : for thus saith the LORD, They shall eat, and shall leave thereof.

So he set it before them, and they did eat, and left thereof, according to the word of the LORD.

And the sons of the prophets said unto Elisha, Behold now, the place where we dwell with thee is too strait for us.

Let us go, we pray thee, unto Jordan, and take thence every man a beam, and let us make us a place there where we may dwell. And he answered, Go ye.

And one said, Be content, I pray thee, and go with thy servants. And he answered, I will go.

So he went with them. And when they came to Jordan, they cut down wood.

But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water : and he cried, and said, Alas, master ! for it was borrowed.

And the man of God said, Where fell it ? And he shewed

shewed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast it in thither, and the iron did swim.

Therefore said he, Take it up to thee. And he put out his hand, and took it.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The law, which authorised the proceedings against the poor widow, seems to have been made originally to deter the Israelites from living beyond their income, which no one would have had occasion to do if all the statutes of the LORD had been observed in the land, because the allotted portion of each family would have amply supplied their wants. But the revolutions which had happened through the disobedience of the LORD's people, had altered the case; and numbers became poor by their own sin and folly, many by the oppression of others.

We have read in what manner Jezebel had persecuted the prophets; and there is some reason to suppose, that the poverty of this woman's husband might be the consequence of that queen's tyranny; however it was, the man had feared the LORD, and his widow and children had a claim to the DIVINE MERCY, because God had graciously promised *to be a father to the fatherless, and a husband to the widow.*

The remarks we lately made on the history of the widow of Zarephath may be applied on the present occasion.

At the time Elisha received such kindness from the Shunamite, he was high in the favour of the king of Israel, and could have promoted the temporal interest of her and her husband; but this good woman had learnt to set bounds to her desires, and having the means of living suitably to her rank in life, she declined his generous offer, thinking it safer and more agreeable to live among those friends whose society she had long been accustomed

to, than to enter on a new scene, merely for the gratification of ambitious views, which, when indulged, are generally found insatiable.

This transaction is supposed to have happened a short time after the deliverance of the kings of Israel, Judah, and Edom, from the Moabites.

The sons of the prophets were assembled at Gilgal, in order to receive instructions from Elisha.

There is nothing in the nature of meal to correct the poisonous quality of any other vegetable substance; the recovery of the pottage therefore was miraculous, and so was the multiplying of the loaves.

The sons of the prophets proposed to build for themselves a very humble edifice, being possessed of no riches to pay either for materials or workmen, therefore each man agreed to contribute his labour in cutting trees, and forming them into beams and planks; nay, so great was their poverty, that some of them, we find, could not even purchase proper tools, but borrowed of their neighbours. The loss of an axe to those who can easily procure such an instrument appears very trifling; but when we consider, that no tree can be felled without tools, that it is not improbable the owner of the axe, which was dropped into the water, might get his own livelihood and provide for a family by cutting timber; that the young man who borrowed it was by the loss rendered useless to his society, and could not claim an apartment without assisting in the building; and, above all, that his reputation was at stake, and even the honour of God concerned, that disgrace should not be brought on religion by an appearance of fraud, in one who professed to be in a particular manner devoted to his service: when we consider all this, we cannot wonder that Elisha should think his disciple's distress deserving of his intercession.

We

We may consider this incident as a proof that God will assist and reward those who are honest and industrious, not by miracles indeed, for they have ceased, but frequently by the most unexpected means.

SECTION LXXI.

BEN-HADAD'S MESSAGE TO ELISHA.

From 2 Kings, Chap. viii.

AND Elisha came to Damascus, and Ben-hadad the king of Syria was sick, and it was told him, saying, The man of God is come hither.

And the king said unto Hazael, Take a present in thine hand, and go meet the man of God, and enquire of the LORD by him, saying, Shall I recover of this disease? So Hazael went to meet him, and took a present with him, even of every good thing of Damascus, forty camels burden, and came and stood before him, and said, Thy son Ben-hadad king of Syria hath sent me to thee, saying, Shall I recover of this disease?

And Elisha said unto him, Go, say unto him, Thou mayest certainly recover; howbeit, the LORD hath shewed me that he shall surely die.

And he settled his countenance stedfastly, until he was ashamed: and the man of God wept.

And Hazael said, Why weepeth my lord? And he answered, Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel: their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women.

And Hazael said, But what, is thy servant a dog that he should do this great thing? And Elisha answered, The LORD hath shewed me that thou shalt be king over Syria.

So he departed from Elisha, and came to his master; who said to him, What said Elisha to thee? and he answered, He told me that thou shouldest surely recover. And it came to pass on the morrow, that Hazael took a thick cloth, and dipped it in water, and spread it on the king's face, so that he died. And Hazael reigned in his stead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We are not told for what purpose Elisha went to Damascus, but may conclude it was by divine appointment. It appears strange, that Ben-hadad, who had hitherto been so inveterate against Elisha, should wish to consult him in his illness; but the honour and respect he paid the prophet at this time shew, that he was convinced his late defeat was an act of omnipotent power, and his illness another judgment from the same Almighty hand; and, it is likely, he imagined the prophet could inform him what would be the event of his disease.

Hazael, who was sent with the present to Elisha, is supposed to have succeeded Naaman in the command of the army. He was the person whom Elijah had received command to anoint king of Syria; but for some reason, with which we are not acquainted, he did not do so; nor does it appear to have been done by Elisha.

The prophet knew, by *divine inspiration*, not only that Hazael would be sovereign of Syria, and in course of time bring miseries upon Israel; but he seems to have been acquainted also with the means by which he would ascend the throne; for when he had informed Hazael, *that Ben-hadad might recover, but would surely die*, he fixed his eye stedfastly on him, till Hazael, confounded with the thoughts that his treacherous designs against his king were known to the prophet, was *ashamed*; and
Elisha,

Elisha, shocked with the view which the LORD gave him of the future calamities that would fall upon Israel, *wept*, which occasioned Hazael to enquire the meaning of the extraordinary emotion : *It is because I know* (replied the holy man) *the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel !*

Hazael was not only offended at the prophet's suggestions, but surprised that he should think him such a monster : for though he might intend to prevent his king's recovery, he did not then suppose that he should ever be capable of committing such horrid barbarities as can only be practised by those who have lost every principle of humanity. Elisha then informed him, this wickedness would be the consequence of his being king of Syria. Happy would it have been for Hazael, as well as for Israel, if this prediction had induced him to examine his own heart, and endeavour to nip in the bud that fatal ambition which already tempted him to lift his murderous hand against his sovereign ! But we find he informed Ben-hadad that Elisha said, he should certainly recover, and then seized the first opportunity of putting him to death, in so private a manner, that it was never even suspected by the Syrians ; for they would scarcely have raised to the throne one whom they knew to be the assassin of a monarch, worthy, in their opinion, to be worshipped as a deity after his death.

In this passage of sacred history, we have two remarkable instances of the influence which affliction and prosperity have on the mind. Ben-hadad, who when he supposed himself able to command the prophet of the LORD, and conquer all nations, treated Elisha with insult, oppression, and contempt ; reduced now to the bed of languishment, found himself a poor helpless creature ; and (recollecting, we may suppose, the cure of Naaman) humbled himself, to court the favour of the prophet by

valuable presents, in hopes that he might be induced to restore him also, or at least to acquaint him with his fate ; but as Ben-hadad did not discover any signs of repentance and conversion, he had no right to expect comfort or intercession from the *man of God* ; and the time was now come when he was to receive the reward of his own arrogance and impiety, by falling a victim to the ambition of another.

Hazael, whilst he was a subject, seems to have been generally esteemed : for we learn, that he was honoured with the confidence of his prince ; and it appears that he was a favourite of the people, since he was, without opposition, chosen to be king of Syria. From whence we may conclude, his conduct had been just and upright : and a sense of rectitude remained strongly impressed on his mind, even when Elisha warned him of the danger of aspiring to the throne : but it is plain he did not know *himself*, for when he became possessed of power he verified the predictions of the prophet in every particular.

This history teaches us, that it is very dangerous to indulge ambitious views, since none can possibly foresee the guilt they may incur in the execution of them. It instructs us also to be contented in that station wherein *God* has placed us, since we have reason to suppose it is the most proper for us. We are likewise admonished to *commit our ways unto the Lord*, and intreat him to assist us by his grace in the government of our passions, since they are too apt to lead us into danger and sin *.

* See a Sermon on this subject by Dr. Blair.

SECTION LXXII.

THE REIGN OF JEHORAM KING OF JUDAH.

From 2 Chronicles, Chap. xxi.

AND Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat reigned in Judah after his father.

And he had brethren the sons of Jehoshaphat, Azariah, and Jehiel, and Zechariah, and Azariah, and Michael, and Shephatiah. All these were the sons of Jehoshaphat king of Israel.

And their father gave them great gifts of silver and of gold, and of precious things, with fenced cities in Judah : but the kingdom gave he to Jehoram ; because he was the first-born.

Now when Jehoram was risen up to the kingdom of his father, he strengthened himself, and slew all his brethren with the sword, and divers also of the princes of Israel.

Howbeit, the LORD would not destroy the house of David, because of the covenant that he had made with David, and as he promised to give a light to him and to his sons for ever.

In his days the Edomites revolted from under the dominion of Judah, and made themselves a king.

Then Jehoram went forth with his princes, and all his chariots with him ; and he rose up by night, and smote the Edomites which compassed him in, and the captains of the chariots.

So the Edomites revolted from under the hand of Judah unto this day. The same time also did Libnah revolt from under his hand ; because he had forsaken the LORD GOD of his fathers.

Moreover, he made high places in the mountains of
Q 4
Judah,

Judah, and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit idolatry, and compelled Judah thereto.

And there came a writing to him from Elijah the prophet, saying, Thus saith the LORD GOD of David thy father, Because thou hast not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat thy father, nor in the ways of Asa king of Judah,

But hast walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and hast made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem like the house of Ahab, and also hast slain thy brethren of thy father's house, which were better than thyself:

Behold, with a great plague will the LORD smite thy people, and thy children, and thy wives, and all thy goods.

And thou shalt have great sickness by disease of thy bowels, until thy bowels fall out by reason of the sickness day by day.

Moreover, the LORD stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines, and of the Arabians, that were near the Ethiopians.

And they came up into Judah, and brake into it, and carried away all the substance that was found in the king's house, and his sons also and his wives; so that there was never a son left him, save Jehoahaz the youngest of his sons.

And after all this the LORD smote him in his bowels with an incurable disease.

And it came to pass that in process of time, after the end of two years, his bowels fell out by reason of his sickness: so he died of sore diseases. And his people made no burning for him, like the burning of his fathers.

Thirty and two years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years, and departed without being desired. Howbeit, they buried him

him in the city of David, but not in the sepulchres of the kings.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

In order to connect the history of Judah, it will be necessary to read over again, before we proceed, the section which contains the latter part of the reign of king Jehoshaphat*.

Jehoram had borne a share in the government with his father for four years before the death of Jehoshaphat. We have already read, that he was married to Ahab's daughter; and now we are informed of the unhappy consequences of this improper alliance; for we may conclude that it was at the instigation of Athaliah, that Jehoram slew his brethren, and introduced the worship of Baal again into Jerusalem.

It was natural to expect, that the judgments of God would follow this wickedness; and accordingly we find the Edomites refused to pay the usual tribute, and set up a king of their own. This revolt completed the prediction of Isaac, *that Esau's posterity should shake off the yoke of Jacob*; which they did so effectually, that the Jews entirely lost their dominion of them. Libnah also threw off its allegiance, and the Philistines and Arabians ravaged the country, plundered the king's palace, and even carried away his wives and children.

It is not easy to account for Elijah's sending a writing to Jehoram. It is supposed that the word Elisha should be put instead of Elijah. This wicked king was permitted to reign but a short time, and his death was evidently a judgment for his sins, since the manner of it agreed exactly with the prophet's prediction.

The gracious care of God for perpetuating the kingdom of Judah and the house of David, in remembrance

* Section lxvi.

of his covenant, was remarkably displayed. It certainly was for David's sake that such wicked kings were endured. For many generations, his name, by a succession of monarchs descended from him, was kept up bright and illustrious, as a lamp is kept burning by a constant supply of fresh oil; and we shall read, that even when the king and people of Judah had so highly provoked the LORD, that he suffered them to be carried away from their own land, the name of David was still honoured, by promises of future and everlasting glory, through a prince descended from him: and his family was preserved, and his tribe had the pre-eminence, till the coming of the Messiah.

We are told that Jehoram *died without being desired*; by which we may understand, that he was hated by his people, who neither wished for his life, nor lamented his death. It appears that the people had fallen into the custom of burning dead bodies, like some of the heathen.

SECTION LXXIII.

THE REIGN OF AHAZIAH (CALLED ALSO * AZARIAH AND † JEHOAHAZ) KING OF JUDAH.

From 2 Chron. Chap. xxii.

AND the inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah Jehoram's youngest son king in his stead. For the band of men that came with the Arabians to the camp had slain all the eldest. So Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah reigned.

Forty and two years old was Ahaziah when he began

* 2 Chron. xxii. 6.

† 2 Chron. xxi. 17. and xxv. 23.

to reign, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Athaliah the daughter of Omri.

He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab : for his mother was his counsellor to do wickedly.

Wherefore he did evil in the sight of the LORD, like the house of Ahab : for they were his counsellors after the death of his father to his destruction.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The history of king Ahaziah is so interwoven with that of Jehoram king of Israel, that it is difficult to separate them. He is said to have been forty-two years old when he began to reign ; but this he could not be, according to his father's age ; it is therefore supposed by the learned, that there is some error in transcribing this passage, and that he was only twenty-two years old.

Notwithstanding Jehoram's life was preserved by the particular Providence of God, when all his brethren were slain, he suffered himself to be influenced by bad counsel and example to do wickedly. One would have supposed that the heavy judgments which had so lately been inflicted on his father, would have made some impression on the mind of Ahaziah ; but he seems to have been a confirmed idolator, and to have been educated in an habitual defiance and hatred of the LORD, from his very infancy.

We must now return to the history of the kings of Israel.

SECTION LXXIV.

THE REIGN OF JEHU KING OF ISRAEL—THE DEATHS
OF JEZEBEL, JEHORAM KING OF ISRAEL, AND
AHAZIAH KING OF JUDAH.

From 2 Chron. Chap. xxii.—2 Kings, Chap. ix.

AND Ahaziah king of Judah went with Jehoram the son of Ahab, to the war against Hazael king of Syria in Ramoth-gilead : and the Syrians wounded Jehoram.

And king Jehoram went back to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds which the Syrians had given him at Ramah, when he fought against Hazael king of Syria. And Ahaziah king of Judah went down to see Jehoram the son of Ahab in Jezreel, because he was sick.

And Elisha the prophet called one of the children of the prophets, and said unto him, Gird up thy loins, and take this box of oil in thine hand, and go to Ramoth-gilead.

And when thou comest thither, look out there Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi, and go in, and make him arise up from among his brethren, and carry him to an inner chamber.

Then take the box of oil, and pour it on his head, and say, Thus saith the LORD, I have anointed thee king over Israel : then open the door, and flee, and tarry not.

So the young man, even the young man the prophet, went to Ramoth-gilead.

And when he came, behold the captains of the host were sitting ; and he said, I have an errand to thee, O Captain. And Jehu said, Unto which of all us ? and he said, To thee, O Captain.

And he arose, and went into the house : and he poured the

the oil on his head, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD GOD of Israel, I have anointed thee king over the people of the LORD, even over Israel.

And thou shalt smite the house of Ahab thy master, that I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD, at the hand of Jezebel. For the whole house of Ahab shall perish.

And I will make the race of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah.

And the dogs shall eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel, and there shall be none to bury her. And he opened the door and fled.

Then Jehu came forth to the servants of his lord : and one said unto him, Is all well ? wherefore came this mad fellow to thee ? and he said unto them, Ye know the man and his communication.

And they said, It is false : tell us now. And he said, Thus and thus spake he to me, saying, Thus saith the LORD, I have anointed thee king over Israel.

Then they hasted, and took every man his garment, and put it under him on the top of the stairs, and blew with trumpets, saying, Jehu is king.

So Jehu the son of Nimshi conspired against Jehoram, and Jehu said, If it be your minds let none go forth nor, escape out of the city to go tell it in Jezreel.

So Jehu rode in a chariot, and went to Jezreel : for Jehoram lay there. And Ahaziah king of Judah was come down to see Jehoram.

And there stood a watchman on the tower in Jezreel, and he spied the company of Jehu as he came, and said, I see a company.

And Jehoram said, Take an horseman and send to meet

meet them, and let him say, is it peace? So there went one on horseback to meet him, and said, Thus saith the king, Is it peace? and Jehu said, What hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me.

And the watchman told, saying, The messenger came to them, but he cometh not again.

Then he sent out a second on horseback, which came to them and said, Thus saith the king, Is it peace? and Jehu answered, What hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me.

And the watchman told, saying, He came even unto them, and cometh not again; and the driving is like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi; for he driveth furiously.

And Jehoram said, Make ready. And his chariot was made ready. And Jehoram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah went out, each in his chariot, and they went out against Jehu, and met him in the portion of Naboth the Jezreelite.

And it came to pass when Jehoram saw Jehu, that he said, Is it peace, Jehu? and he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many? And Jehoram turned his hands, and fled, and said to Ahaziah, There is treachery, O Ahaziah.

And Jehu drew a bow with his full strength, and smote Jehoram between his arms, and the arrow went out at his heart, and he sunk down in his chariot.

Then said Jehu to Bidkar his captain, Take up, and cast him in the portion of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite.

For remember how that, when I and thou rode together after Ahab his father, the LORD laid this burden upon him: Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth,

Naboth, and the blood of his sons, saith the LORD : and I will requite thee in this plat, saith the LORD.

Now therefore take and cast him into the plat of ground, according to the word of the LORD.

But when Ahaziah the king of Judah saw this, he fled by the way of the garden-house, and Jehu followed after him, and said, Smite him also in the chariot. And they did so at the going up to Gur, which is by Ibleam, and he fled to Megiddo, and died there.

And his servants carried him in a chariot to Jerusalem, and buried him in a sepulchre with his fathers in the city of David.

And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it, and she painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out at a window.

And as Jehu entered in at the gate, she said, Had Zimri peace who slew his master? And he lifted up his face to the window, and said, Who is on my side? who? and there looked out to him two or three eunuchs.

And he said, Throw her down. So they threw her down: and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses: and he trod her under foot.

And when he was come in he did eat and drink: and said, Go see now this cursed woman and bury her; for she is a king's daughter.

And they went to bury her; but they found no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands.

Wherefore they came again and told him. And he said, This is the word of the LORD which he spake by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel.

And the carcase of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field in the portion of Jezreel; so that they shall not say, This is Jezebel.

ANNO-

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Ramoth-gilead was a place of long dispute between Israel and Syria: Jehoram had lately had an engagement with Hazael king of Syria not far from it, wherein he had received some very dangerous wounds, and was gone down to Jezreel to be cured of them. His army, however, continued the siege, under the command of Jehu, who, in the king's absence, acted as captain general.

Jehu seems to have had no previous intimation of his appointment to the throne of Israel; neither do we read that he had any intention to raise a conspiracy against his sovereign; but when commanded of GOD, it was his duty to obey. It is very shocking to read of such a dreadful massacre as was made on this occasion, but if we recollect the great number of just and innocent persons, who had been put to death by the house of Ahab in defiance of GOD HIMSELF, we cannot but acknowledge the justice of the LORD in bringing such judgments upon their murderers; especially as he had caused his prophet Elijah to warn them that he should do so unless they would repent.

Jezebel, and the whole house of Ahab, were confirmed idolators, notwithstanding the LORD had graciously employed various means to convert them. They had been afflicted with adversity to humble their minds; prophets had been sent, and miracles wrought, to deliver them from distress, yet they hardened their hearts; and as their numbers increased, they would, if they had been suffered to live, have corrupted many, who were now instructed by the miserable fate of these sinners to persevere in the worship of the LORD.

It is needless to comment on the justice of Jezebel's fate;

fate; but we should remark that the prophecy of Elisha was literally fulfilled in every respect.

Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria. It is supposed, that those who had the care of the young princes, fled with them from Jezreel to that city, thinking they would be safest in the capital: but it appears*, that Jehu wrote letters to the rulers of that place, saying, "*as you have your master's sons with you, also chariots and horses, and are in a fenced city, set up one of them for a king and fight for your master's house;*" these letters were ironical! for he could not suppose they would venture, in the present situation of affairs, to set up one of Ahab's sons in competition with him who was proceeding, with so much impetuosity, to destroy the house of Ahab; those to whom these letters were addressed were greatly intimidated, and returned him for answer, "*that they would do that which was good in his eyes;*" on which he wrote them a second letter, requiring them to bring the heads of their master's sons to him in Jezreel; they were easily induced, for their own safety, to become themselves the executioners of the young princes; "those who have been false to their God, are soon persuaded to be false to their friends; and they accordingly slew them all, and sent their heads in baskets to Jezreel, which Jehu commanded to be laid in two heaps at the entering of the gate, till the morning; when, addressing himself to the rulers of Jezreel, he justified, from their action, his own treatment of the other persons in Ahab's family; for if the guardians of the young princes were blameless for killing so many persons *by his order*, surely *he was not to be condemned* for what he had done by *Divine command*."

Jehu then proceeded to slay the rest of Ahab's house,

* 2 Kings, chap. x.

till he left none remaining in Jezreel: pursuing his way to Samaria, he met some of the brethren of Ahaziah, amounting to forty persons, who were going to visit the children of the king and the queen of Israel; these he killed also, for they were justly included in the destruction of this wicked race, as their father had entered into so intimate an alliance with Ahab's family, and imitated him in some of his worst crimes: they are supposed to have been some of Athaliah's relations.

Jehu next resolved to cut off all the worshippers of Baal; for this purpose he caused a solemn assembly to be called, and commanded every one to attend, saying, "*Ahab served Baal a little, but I will serve him much.*" When they were all collected in the idol's temple, he gave orders to eighty men who were without, to put them, without reserve, to the sword; they then brake down the image, and destroyed the house.

Jonadab the son of Rechab was a pious good man, who lived a retired life; being well acquainted with the prophecies against Ahab's house, he imputed Jehu's conduct to zeal for the LORD, and on this account he went to meet him, and gave him countenance.

Jehu seems to have been so intoxicated with the power which God had put into his hands, that he did not stay to consider. So he could but establish himself on the throne, to which the destruction of Ahab's race and Baal's worshippers was necessary, he regarded not by what means; and it must be acknowledged, that his behaviour to the latter was treacherous and false; neither was he *commissioned* to cut them off in *that manner*; for, as he was king, he might have caused false worshippers to be put to death by the hands of justice, in a regular way, especially as he would have been defended from opposition by Divine power.

Jehu

Jehu was a man of a furious temper, and as such, a proper instrument for the execution of Divine vengeance; if Israel had continued faithful to the LORD, or would have hearkened to the warnings of the prophets, this violent man would never have had the power to oppress them; but as they were obdurate, it pleased God to raise him up for their chastisement.

* That the world might learn, and Jehu himself remember, that Ahab's race was devoted to destruction for their sins, he received the approbation of the LORD, for the punctual execution of the Divine command, with a promise that his family should continue on the throne for four generations: it might have been expected, that this would have encouraged Jehu to propagate the worship of the LORD, but he retained the worship of the golden calves; for these abominations he was punished with an unquiet reign, and his subjects were afflicted for their sins by Hazael, the cruel king of Syria, who turned his arms against them, and is supposed, at this time, to have practised some of those barbarities predicted by the prophet Elisha.

Jehu is thought to have defended his country from its invaders with great spirit and skill; but the records of his reign, which are said to have been written in the chronicles of the kings of Israel, are lost; therefore it is impossible to obtain farther particulars of him.

It is easy to distinguish the faults in Jehu's conduct. They cannot be imputed to the command of God, as he certainly might have destroyed the family of Ahab, assisted as he was by Almighty power, without employing either deceit or treachery; he might also have secured his own prosperity, if his behaviour had been thoroughly

consistent with his duty as king of Israel, and servant of the LORD JEHOVAH.

SECTION LXXV.

THE REIGN OF ATHALIAH QUEEN OF JUDAH.

2 Chronicles, Chap. xxii, xxiii.

AND when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose, and destroyed all the seed royal of the house of Judah.

But Jehoshabeath the daughter of the king took Joash, the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons that were slain, and put him and his nurse in a bed-chamber. So Jehoshabeath the daughter of king Jehoram, the wife of Jehoiada the priest (for she was the sister of Ahaziah) hid him from Athaliah, so that she slew him not.

And he was with her hid in the house of the LORD six years. And Athaliah did reign over the land.

And the seventh year Jehoiada sent and fetched the rulers over hundreds, with the captains and the guard, and brought them to him into the house of the LORD, and made a covenant with them, and took an oath of them in the house of the LORD, and shewed them the king's son.

And he commanded them, saying, This is the thing that ye shall do; a third part of you that enter it on the sabbath shall even be keepers of the watch of the king's house;

And a third part shall be at the gate of Sur; and a third part at the gate behind the guard: so shall ye keep the watch of the house, that it be not broken down.

And two parts of all you that go forth on the sabbath, even

even they shall keep the watch of the house of the **LORD** about the king.

And ye shall compass the king round about, every man with his weapons in his hand ; and he that cometh within the ranges, let him be slain. And be ye with the king as he goeth out, and as he cometh in.

And the captains over the hundreds did according to all things that Jehoiada the priest commanded : and they took every man his men that were to come in on the sabbath, with them that should go out on the sabbath, and came to Jehoiada the priest.

And to the captains over hundreds did the priest give king David's spear and shields, that were in the temple of the **LORD**.

And the guard stood every man with his weapons in his hand, round about the king, from the right corner of the temple to the left corner of the temple, along by the altar and the temple.

And he brought forth the king's son, and put the crown upon him, and gave him the testimony ; and they made him king, and anointed him ; and they clapped their hands, and said, **GOD** save the king.

And when Athaliah heard the noise of the guard and of the people, she came to the people into the temple of the **LORD**.

And when she looked, behold, the king stood by a pillar, as the manner was, and the princes and the trumpeters by the king, and all the people of the land rejoiced and blew with trumpets. And Athaliah rent her clothes, and cried, 'Treason, treason.

But Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains of the hundreds, the officers of the host, and said unto them, Have her forth without the ranges ; and him that followeth her kill with the sword. For the priest had said, Let her not be slain in the house of the **LORD**.

And

And they laid hands on her, and she went by the way, by which the horses came into the king's house, and there was she slain.

And Jehoiada made a covenant between him, and between all the people, and between the king, that they should be the LORD's people.

Then all the people went to the house of Baal, and brake it down, and brake his altars and his images in pieces, and slew Mattan the priest of Baal before the altar.

Also Jehoiada appointed the officers of the house of the LORD by the hand of the priests the Levites, whom David had distributed in the house of the LORD, to offer the burnt offerings of the LORD, as it is written in the law of Moses, with rejoicing and with singing, as it was ordained by David.

And he set the porters at the gates of the house of the LORD, that none which was unclean in any thing should enter in.

And he took the captains of hundreds, and the nobles, and the governors of the people, and all the people of the land, and brought down the king from the house of the LORD: and they came through the high gate into the king's house, and set the king upon the throne of the kingdom.

And all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was quiet, after that they had slain Athaliah with the sword.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

In this section, we may observe the dreadful effects of impiety and ambition. It is remarked, that the affection of parents is generally strongest to the second generation, that they love their grand-children, not only on account of the relation they bear to themselves, but for the sake
of

of those, whose immediate offspring they are. How shocking is it to read of Athaliah's attempt to cut off the whole race of her's, that she might gratify her boundless ambition; but, as the apostle to the Romans hints*, it is the usual effect of impiety, to root out natural affection; and we cannot wonder that she, who could counsel her own son to do wickedly, should proceed to this extremity of cruelty. The justice of GOD, in suffering Athaliah to come to such a wretched end needs no comment, neither is there occasion to enlarge on the faithfulness of the LORD GOD, displayed in the preservation of Joash. It may however be proper to observe, that this young prince found in the temple an asylum for his helpless innocence, when there was no other place of refuge for him, which is great encouragement to children to put their trust in the LORD, and also to frequent places of public worship. How many by neglecting them, to pursue idle sports, have come to untimely ends!

SECTION LXXVI.

THE REIGN OF JOASH (CALLED ALSO JEHOASH)
KING OF JUDAH.

From 2 Chron. Chap. xxiv. 2 Kings, Chap. xii.

JOASH was seven years old when he began to reign.

And Joash did that which was right in the sight of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest, and he had two wives, and sons and daughters.

And it came to pass after this, that Joash was minded to repair the house of the LORD.

(For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken up the house of GOD; and also all the dedicated

* Romans, i. 31.

things of the house of the LORD did they bestow upon Baalim.)

So the workmen wrought, and the work was perfected by them, and they set the house of God in his state, and strengthened it.

But Jehoiada waxed old, and was full of days when he died : an hundred and thirty years old was he when he died.

And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, both toward God, and toward his house.

Now after the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance unto the king. Then the king hearkened unto them.

And they left the house of the LORD God of their fathers, and served groves and idols : and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their trespass.

Yet he sent prophets to them to bring them again unto the LORD, and they testified against them : but they would not give ear.

And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD that ye cannot prosper ? because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you.

And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the Lord.

Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada Zechariah's father had done to him, but slew his son. And when he died, Zechariah said, The LORD look upon it, and requite it.

Then Hazael king of Syria went up, and fought against

against Gath, and took it : and Hazael set his face to go up to Jerusalem.

And Joash king of Judah took all the hallowed things that Jehoshaphat and Jehoram and Ahaziah, his fathers, kings of Judah, had dedicated, and his own hallowed things, and all the gold that was found in the treasures of the house of the LORD, and in the king's house, and sent it to Hazael king of Syria : and he went away from Jerusalem.

And it came to pass at the end of the year, that the host of Syria came up against him ; and they came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people, and sent all the spoil of them unto the king of Damascus.

For the army of the Syrians came with a small company of men, and the LORD delivered a very great host into their hand, because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers : so they executed judgment against Joash.

And when they were departed from him (for they left him in great diseases) his own servants conspired against him, for the blood of the sons of Jehoiada the priest, and slew him on his bed ; and he died : and they buried him in the city of David, but not in the sepulchres of the kings. He reigned forty years.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Joash was extremely fortunate in the beginning of his reign, in being under the direction of so good and pious a man as Jehoiada, for both the king and his subjects experienced the happy effects of his excellent management. Whilst Joash continued under the influence of Jehoiada, he appeared wise and amiable, and the blessing of the

LORD attended him ; but as soon as he suffered himself to be perverted from the worship of the LORD, his happiness and prosperity forsook him, for *wrath came upon him from the LORD* ; and the Syrians were permitted to prevail against him.

We may easily imagine the miseries which Judah endured, by falling into the cruel hands of Hazael ; yet they could not justly reproach GOD for raising them up such an enemy, as he would undoubtedly have been restrained from hurting them, (as he was during the life of Jehoiada) if they had not provoked the Divine chastisement by their apostasy.

Nothing could be a greater insult to the LORD, than the murder of the prophet Zechariah, whom they stoned whilst he was declaring the *word of the LORD*, in a place always deemed sacred, the court of the Temple. This wickedness was too notorious to escape the vengeance of GOD ; and it added greatly to the measure of the national guilt*.

How does every portion of sacred history exemplify the *truth, justice, wisdom, and goodness* of the SUPREME BEING !

SECTION LXXVII.

THE REIGN OF JEHOAHAAZ KING OF ISRAEL.

From 2 Kings, Chap. xiii.

In the three and twentieth year of Joash the son of Ahaziah king of Judah, Jehoahaz the son of Jehu began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned seventeen years.

And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, and followed the sins of Jeroboam the son of

* See Matt. chap. xxiii. 35.

Nebat, which made Israel to sin : he departed not therefrom.

And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and into the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael, all their days.

And Jehoahaz besought the LORD, and the LORD hearkened unto him : for he saw the oppression of Israel, because the king of Syria oppressed them.

Neither did he leave of the people to Jehoahaz, but fifty horsemen, and ten chariots, and ten thousand footmen : for the king of Syria had destroyed them, and had made them like the dust by threshing.

And the LORD gave Israel a Saviour, so that they went out from under the hand of the Syrians : and the children of Israel dwelt in their tents as beforetime.

Nevertheless, they departed not from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, who made Israel to sin, but walked therein : and there remained the grove also in Samaria.

And Jehoahaz slept with his fathers : and they buried him in Samaria. And Jehoash his son reigned in his stead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

How shocking it is to read of the degeneracy of Israel ! When we compare their abject condition in the days of Jehoahaz, with their glory and eminence in the reigns of David and Solomon, we can scarcely believe them to be the same nation which was chosen as the peculiar people of God. Whilst they continued faithful to him, the LORD himself *was their defence, and their help, and the sword of their excellency* : when they forsook him they were stripped of their honour, and exposed to the insults of their neighbours ; yet did not the LORD forget *His*

Covenant, for when they returned unto Him with true contrition, He never rejected their prayers ; a remarkable instance of which we have in the history of Jehoahaz, who was rescued from utter destruction by a miraculous deliverance, at a time when Hazael had gained such advantages, that had he not been restrained by *omnipotent power*, he would have entirely *extirpated* the kingdom of Israel : but though he was permitted to succeed against this people, on account of their sins ; yet could the same **ALMIGHTY BEING**, who ruleth the raging of the ocean, restrain the turbulent passions of this haughty monarch, and say to him, *Hitherto shalt thou go, and no farther.*

Let this instance encourage those who have forsaken the **LORD**, to turn unto Him, and He will have mercy upon them.

SECTION LXXVIII.

THE REIGN OF JEHOASH (CALLED ALSO JOASH) KING
OF ISRAEL.

From 2 Kings, Chap. xiii.

IN the thirty and seventh year of Joash king of Judah, began Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned with his father.

And he did that which was evil in the sight of the **LORD** : he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin ; but he walked therein.

Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died ; and Jehoash the king of Israel came down unto him, and wept over his face, and said, O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.

And Elisha said unto him, Take bow and arrows. And he took unto him bow and arrows.

And

And he said unto the king of Israel, Put thine hand upon the bow. And he put his hand upon it : And Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands.

And he said, Open the window eastward. And he opened it. Then Elisha said, Shoot. And he shot. And he said, The arrow of the LORD's deliverance from Syria : for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek till thou have consumed them.

And he said, Take the arrows. And he took them. And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground. And he smote thrice, and stayed.

And the man of GOD was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times ; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it : whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice.

And Elisha died, and they buried him. And the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year.

And it came to pass as they were burying a man, that behold they spied a band of men ; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha ; and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet.

But Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz.

And the LORD was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence as yet.

So Hazael king of Syria died ; and Ben-hadad his son reigned in his stead.

And Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz took again out of the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael, the cities
R 3 which

which he had taken out of the hand of Jehoahaz his father by war, three times did Jehoash beat him, and recovered the cities of Israel.

And Jehoash slept with his fathers ; and Jeroboam sat upon his throne ; and Jehoash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel.

And the rest of the acts of Jehoash, and all that he did, and his might wherewith he fought against Amaziah king of Judah, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Jehoash continued the abominations which Jeroboam had fatally introduced into Israel, and in that particular he did evil in the sight of the LORD : yet he had a great personal respect for the prophet Elisha, and he revered the LORD *in some degree*, though he did not serve Him with a *perfect heart*.

Elisha lived to an advanced age. It was about sixty years since he had been called to the prophetic office by Elijah ; and though we do not read of his having been employed of GOD in any particular service for a long time, it is most likely he continued his admonitions, and had performed some good offices for Israel, or Jehoash would not have addressed him in those endearing words which Elisha himself made use of when Elijah was taken from him : *My father ! my father ! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof !* Perhaps Elisha was the *saviour* whom the LORD is said to have raised up to deliver them, by his intercessions and prayers, out of the hands of the Syrians ; this opinion is confirmed by Elisha's last action in the character of a prophet. He gave the king great assurances of success against the Syrians, and encouraged him to prosecute the war with vigour ; and to animate him

him, gave him a sign that he was commissioned to attack them with a promise of success. "*It is,*" said Elisha, "*the arrow of the LORD's deliverance, even the arrow of deliverance from Syria.*" The prophet having, in God's name, assured him of victory over the Syrians, proved him by another sign whether he would pursue them with more zeal than Ahab had done: this was the meaning of his bidding him "*strike with the arrow on the ground;*" as much as to say, "*believe* them brought to the ground by the arrow of the LORD, given into your hand; now let me see how you will improve these advantages.*" The king shewed not that eagerness and warmth that might have been expected, but *smote thrice and no more*. Perhaps he contemned the sign, and distrusted the prophet; and there is reason to suppose, that it was to confirm the truth of Elisha's being divinely inspired, that the miracle we read of after the account of his death was performed: many of the Israelites might have represented Elisha as an *impostor*, and thrown aspersions on his memory; this miracle served to *establish his reputation* as a PROPHET, and to give the people confidence in respect to the conquest of the Syrians, which he had predicted. Elijah was honoured by the translation of *his BODY to heaven*: Elisha was filled with the same HOLY SPIRIT that had before inspired his master, and followed the example of his fidelity to God; therefore the LORD honoured *his BODY also in the sight of the world*, but in a different way, by making it (after his own soul was departed from it) an *instrument of DIVINE POWER*, in restoring life to a dead man. We must not suppose, that there was an inherent virtue in the remains of Elisha, more than in those of another man: Divine Inspiration did not alter the nature of prophets, their bodies were still subject to diseases and decay, and their minds liable to passions and sin; excepting when

* Henry's Annotations.

they were miraculously sustained and illuminated by the particular interposition of the SUPREME BEING, what they said or did in the name of the LORD was entirely unpremeditated: they were no farther *holy* than as they were sacred, or set apart for the service of GOD, and lived agreeably to their holy appointment; yet on these accounts they were justly revered, and for the good offices they performed for the world they were entitled to *esteem*. The miracle of raising the dead man may be considered as a proof of the immortality of the soul; but this truth we need not attend to here, as we shall find still better evidence for it as we proceed.

We have already read in the history of the kings of JUDAH, that Hazael invaded that country, and even thought to attempt the conquest of Jerusalem; but he was diverted from his purpose by gifts of the treasures of the LORD's House, which Joash the king, who at that time reigned over Judah, was induced to make him through fear.

Hazael*, having thus subdued and tyrannized over the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, died, and his infatuated people paid divine honours to his memory.

Though Hazael was a great *monarch*, he must have been an unhappy *man*; for it is impossible that a mind like his, perpetually hurried by tumultuous passions should know the invaluable blessing of inward peace and satisfaction.

He left behind him a son and successor, named Ben-hadad, who suffered a total reverse of his father's fortune. Jehoash king of Israel defeated him thrice, as Elisha had predicted, and recovered from him all that Hazael had taken from Israel. Jehoash is supposed to have divided the government of the kingdom with his son Jeroboam for the last ten years of his reign.

* Universal History.

SECTION

SECTION LXXIX.

THE REIGN OF AMAZIAH KING OF JUDAH.

From 2 Chronicles, Chap. xxv.

AMAZIAH was twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, but not with a perfect heart.

Now it came to pass when the kingdom was established to him, that he slew his servants that had killed the king his father : but he slew not their children, but did as it is written in the law in the book of Moses, where the LORD commanded, saying, The fathers shall not die for the children, neither shall the children die for the fathers, but every man shall die for his own sin.

Moreover, Amaziah gathered Judah together ; and made them captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, according to the houses of their fathers, throughout all Judah and Benjamin : and he numbered them from twenty years old and above, and found them three hundred thousand choice men, able to go forth to war, that could handle spear and shield.

He hired also an hundred thousand mighty men of valour out of Israel for an hundred talents of silver.

But there came a man of GOD to him, saying, O king, let not the army of Israel go with thee, for the LORD is not with Israel, to wit, with all the children of Ephraim.

But if thou wilt go, do it, be strong for the battle : GOD shall make thee fall before the enemy : for GOD hath power to help, and to cast down.

And Amaziah said to the man of GOD, But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the

army of Israel? and the man of God answered, The LORD is able to give thee much more than this.

Then Amaziah separated them, to wit, the army that was come to him out of Ephraim, to go home again: wherefore their anger was greatly kindled against Judah, and they returned home in great anger.

And Amaziah strengthened himself, and led forth his people, and went to the valley of salt, and smote of the children of Seir ten thousand.

And other ten thousand left alive did the children of Judah carry away captive, and brought them unto the top of the rock, and cast them down from the top of the rock, that they were broken all in pieces.

But the soldiers of the army which Amaziah sent back, that they should not go with him to battle, fell upon the cities of Judah, from Samaria even unto Beth-horon, and smote three thousand of them, and took much spoil.

Now it came to pass, after that Amaziah was come from the slaughter of the Edomites, that he brought the gods of the children of Seir, and set them up to be his gods, and bowed down himself before them, and burned incense unto them.

Wherefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against Amaziah, and he sent unto him a prophet, which said unto him, Why hast thou sought after the gods of the people, which could not deliver their own people out of thine hand.

And it came to pass as he talked with him, that the king said unto him, Art thou made of the king's counsel? forbear; why shouldest thou be smitten? Then the prophet forbore, and said, I know that God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened unto my counsel.

Then Amaziah king of Judah took advice, and sent to
Jehoash,

Jehoash, the son of Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, Come, let us see one another in the face.

And Jehoash king of Israel sent to Amaziah king of Judah, saying, The thistle that was in Lebanon sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son to wife ; and their passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon, and trode down the thistle.

Thou sayest, Lo thou hast smitten the Edomites, and thine heart lifteth thee up to boast : abide now at home ; why shouldest thou meddle to thine hurt that thou shouldst fall, even thou, and Judah with thee ?

But Amaziah would not hear : for it came of God that he might deliver them into the hand of their enemies, because they sought after the gods of Edom.

So Jehoash the king of Israel went up ; and they saw one another in the face, both he and Amaziah king of Judah, at Beth-shemesh, which belongeth to Judah.

And Judah was put to the worse before Israel, and they fled every man to his tent.

And Jehoash the king of Israel took Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Jehoash, the son of Jehoahaz, at Beth-shemesh, and brought him to Jerusalem, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, from the gate of Ephraim to the corner gate, four hundred cubits.

And he took all the gold and the silver, and all the vessels that were found in the house of God with Obed-edom, and the treasures of the king's house, the hostages also, and returned to Samaria.

And Amaziah the son of Jehoash king of Judah lived after the death of Jehoash, son of Jehoahaz king of Israel, fifteen years. And he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem.

Now after the time that Amaziah did turn away from following the LORD, they made a conspiracy against him

in Jerusalem ; and he fled to Lachish ; but they sent to Lachish after him, and slew him there.

And they brought him upon horses, and buried him with his fathers in the city of Judah.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Amaziah had lately seen such severe judgments inflicted upon his father Jehoash, for his apostasy, that, in the beginning of his reign, he was intimidated from following idols. He worshipped the true God, and kept up the Temple service, but *he had not a perfect heart* ; from which we may understand, that he was not a man of serious piety himself, nor had he any zeal for the ordinances of religion. He was not an enemy, but a cool and indifferent friend.

It was Amaziah's duty to call his father's murderers to account ; for, though they intended to avenge the death of the prophet Zechariah, they were not authorized to kill their sovereign.

We read, in the history of Jehoram king of Judah, that the Edomites (who from the days of David had been governed by a deputy) revolted, and set up a king of their own. Amaziah resolved to attempt reducing them ; and thinking his own army insufficient*, he resolved to hire auxiliaries. The proper step for him to have taken in such a case would have been to consult a prophet of the LORD. That he might not run headlong into destruction, a prophet was, notwithstanding his neglect, graciously sent by the LORD to warn him of the danger of an alliance with Israel ; and he dismissed the troops. His obedience was rewarded with success against the Edomites.

Why God permitted the Israelites to commit such devastations, in their return home, we are not told ; but we may suppose that the inhabitants of the cities in Judah, who were thus given up to their rage, were idolators.

* In the days of Jehoshaphat there were four times as many.

It is shocking to read of Amaziah's cruelty to the Edomites, and not easy to be accounted for in so *mixed* a character. What he did on his return was *evidently a great act of sin and folly*; yet the goodness of the LORD was still extended towards him, but he was deaf to the kind remonstrances of the prophet, and we cannot wonder at the adversity which afterwards befel him.

By whom Amaziah was advised to shew resentment to the king of Israel, for the devastations his subjects had made, we are not told; but they proved to be evil counsellors. Jehoash had by this time gained the three victories over the Syrians, foretold by the prophet Elisha, which had doubtless elated him; and he could not forbear expressing the utmost contempt at Amaziah's arrogant challenge. The answer Jehoash returned was couched in the most scornful and mortifying terms, under the allegory of a despicable thistle, which having aspired to an alliance with the noble cedar, had, for its ambition, been crushed under the feet of a wild beast: he concluded with advising Amaziah to rest contented with his late petty victories, and not to suffer his ambition to drive him into desperate attempts, which would, most likely, end in the total loss of his kingdom.

Josephus, an ancient Jewish author, informs us, that Amaziah's army was seized with sudden terror, and turned their backs on Israel, without striking one stroke; and left their king to the mercy of the conqueror, who led him prisoner to Jerusalem, where he obliged him to purchase his freedom at the expence of all the gold and silver which were found, either in the Temple or his own treasury; after which, having demolished a part of the city wall, and taken hostages, he returned to Samaria.

As for Amaziah, though he out-lived his disgrace about fifteen years, we do not read that he performed any memorable

memorable action; but continuing to follow idolatrous practices, the favour of the LORD was totally withdrawn from him, he fell by the hands of his own subjects, and his corpse was treated with indignity, but at length buried with his ancestors.

SECTION LXXX:

THE REIGN OF JEROBOAM THE SECOND, KING OF ISRAEL.

From 2 Kings, Chap. xiv.

IN the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah, Jeroboam the son of Jehoash king of Israel began to reign in Samaria.

He restored the coast of Israel, from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the LORD GOD of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gath-heper.

For the LORD saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter: for there was not any shut up, nor any left, nor any helper for Israel.

And the LORD said not that he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven: but he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Jehoash.

So Jeroboam warred and recovered for Israel Hamath and Damascus, which belonged to Judah.

And Jeroboam reigned forty-one years, and he slept with his fathers, even with the kings of Israel: and Zachariah his son reigned in his stead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Though the reign of this king is long, the history of it is related in few words. Jeroboam was a very valiant and politic

politic prince, and God enabled him, *for the sake of the race of Jacob*, to work great deliverances for Israel, and to restore this kingdom to splendour and power. We find he took the city of Damascus (which was the capital of Syria) and Hamath, both which formerly belonged to Judah; besides a vast extent of country. The particulars of these valiant exploits are unknown to us, having been written in the annals of the kings of Israel, long since lost.

After the death of Elisha, it pleased the Lord to raise up a succession of prophets in Israel and Judah, to give them instructions and exhortations, and to denounce his threatenings against them upon their persisting in impiety; and these he appointed, not only to warn them by word of mouth (as his former prophets had done), but to commit their admonitions to writing, that posterity might see the ingratitude of his people, and all nations, from their crimes and punishment, learn not to do so wickedly.

Those *written prophecies* contain much of general instruction.

SECTION LXXXI.

PART OF THE PROPHECY OF AMOS.

From Chap. i, &c.

THE words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel, in the days of Jeroboam king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof: because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes.

That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek :

Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth : therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.

Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid ? shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it ? Surely, the LORD GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.

The lion hath roared, who will not fear ? the LORD GOD hath spoken, who can but prophecy ?

Hear ye, and testify in the house of Jacob, saith the LORD GOD, the GOD of hosts, that in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him, I will also visit the altars of Beth-el : and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground.

And I will smite the winter-house with the summer-house ; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the LORD.

Come to Beth-el, and transgress ; at Gilgal multiply transgression ; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tythes after three years : and offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with heaven, and proclaim and publish the free-offerings : for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the LORD GOD.

And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places : yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

And also I have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest ; and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city : one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered.

So

So two or three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water ; but they were not satisfied : yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

I have smitten you with blasting and mildew : when your gardens and your vineyards, and your fig-trees, and your olive-trees increased, the palmer-worm devoured them : yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt : your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses ; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils : yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

I have overthrown some of you as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning : yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel ; and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.

For lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth ; the LORD the God of hosts is his name.

For thus saith the LORD unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live : But seek not Beth-el, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beer-sheba : for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Beth-el shall come to nought.

Seek good, and not evil ; that ye may live : and so the LORD the God of hosts shall be with you, as ye have spoken.

Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate ; it may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.

Then

Then Amaziah the priest of Beth-el sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel ; the land is not able to bear all his words.

For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land.

Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there : but prophesy not again any more at Beth-el ; for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court.

Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son ; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit ; and the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.

Then said the LORD unto me, The end is come upon my people Israel : I will not again pass by them any more.

Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail.

The LORD hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works.

Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein ? and it shall rise up wholly as a flood ; and it shall be cast out and drowned as by the flood of Egypt.

And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation, and will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head : and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day.

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread,

nor

nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD.

And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the North even to the East they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it.

They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy god, O Dan, liveth: and the manner of Beer-sheba liveth: even they shall fall, and never rise up again.

Behold the eyes of the LORD GOD are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the LORD.

For lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth.

And Jeroboam reigned in Samaria forty and one years.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Amos is supposed to have begun to prophesy about six years before the death of Jeroboam the second, king of Israel; in the reign of Uzziah king of Judah.

By these extracts from the predictions of Amos, we learn, that the *public crimes*, for which the Jews were threatened with *public calamities*, were *forsaking and neglecting the worship of God*; and being *guilty of fraud, deceit, cruelty, and oppression*. Every nation, therefore, in which such sins prevail, may justly fear God's judgments; for this reason every *individual* should take warning by the prophetic writings, to contribute his part towards a general reformation of the kingdom he belongs to.

SECTION LXXXII.

THE REIGN OF UZZIAH (CALLED ALSO * AZARIAH)
KING OF JUDAH.

From 2 Chronicles, Chap. xxvi.

AFTER the death of Amaziah all the people of Judah took Uzziah his son, who was sixteen years old, and made him king in the room of his father.

In the twenty and seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel began Uzziah son of Amaziah, king of Judah, to reign.

Sixteen years old was Uzziah when he began to reign. And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah did in the beginning of his reign.

And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God : and as long as he sought the LORD, GOD made him to prosper,

And he went forth and warred against the Philistines, and God helped him against the Philistines.

And the Ammonites gave gifts to Uzziah : and his name spread abroad even to the entering in of Egypt : for he strengthened himself exceedingly.

Also he built towers in Jerusalem, and in the desert, and digged many wells for he had much cattle, and vine-dressers ; for he loved husbandry.

And he had an host of fighting men : the whole number of the chief of the fathers of the mighty men of valour were two thousand and six hundred.

And under their hand was an army, three hundred thousand and seven thousand and five hundred that made

* 2 Kings, kv. 1.

war with mighty power, to help the king against the enemy.

And Uzziah prepared for them, throughout all the host, shields, and spears, and helmets, and habergeons, and bows, and slings to cast stones.

And he made in Jerusalem engines invented by cunning men to be on the towers and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones withal. And his name spread far abroad: for he was marvellously helped till he was strong.

But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his GOD, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense.

And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD that were valiant men: and they withstood Uzziah, the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense; go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed, neither shall it be for thine honour from the LORD GOD.

Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests, in the house of the Lord, from beside the incense altar.

And Azariah the high priest, and all the priests looked upon him, and behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out; because the LORD had smitten him.

And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, being a leper; for he

he was cut off from the house of the LORD: and Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land.

Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, first and last, did Isaiah the prophet the son of Amos write.

So Uzziah slept with his fathers, and they buried him with his fathers, in the field of the burial which belonged to the kings: for they said, He is a leper. And Jotham his son reigned in his stead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The reign and character of Uzziah bear so great a resemblance to those of former kings, that it is needless to enlarge much upon them. He does not appear to have been at any time given to *idolatrous practices*, but to have grown *careless* in the discharge of his religious duties, after the death of Zechariah. Who this good man was, to whom the king was so much indebted, we are not told; but some imagine he was the son of that Zechariah who was murdered by king Joash.

Uzziah was the means of raising the kingdom of Judah, through the blessing of God, to such a pitch of eminence as it had not known for a number of years; for he attended to every particular which constitutes the temporal greatness of a nation. From the punishment inflicted upon this king we learn that it is a very presumptuous act for any who are not properly consecrated to invade the priest's office; and we find that Uzziah was humbled in a most exemplary manner: he could no longer contest with the priests, for they had an undoubted right to exclude all lepers from the congregation, and even from society.

We understand, from some passages in Scripture, that

in the days of Uzziah there was a terrible earthquake (foretold by Amos two years before), a plague of locusts, and a great drought, mixed with dreadful flashes of fire.

SECTION LXXXIII.

PART OF THE PROPHECY OF ISAIAH.

From Chap. i.

THE vision of Isaiah the son of Amos, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

Hear, O heavens; and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.

The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.

Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters! They have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL unto anger, they are gone away backward.

Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more; the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores; they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.

Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire; your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate as overthrown by strangers.

And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.

Except

Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

Hear the word of the LORD ye rulers of Sodom ; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah ; to what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me ? saith the LORD : I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts ; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.

When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand to tread my courts ? Bring no more vain oblations ; incense is an abomination unto me ; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with ; it is iniquity, even the solemn meetings.

Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth : they are a trouble unto me ; I am weary to bear them.

When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you : yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear : your hands are full of blood.

Wash you, make you clean ; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes ; cease to do evil ; learn to do well : seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD : though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow ; though they be red as crimson, they shall be as wool.

If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land : but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword : for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

How is the faithful city become an harlot ! it was full of

of judgment: righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers.

Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water: thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.

Therefore saith the LORD, the LORD of hosts, the mighty one of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Isaiah began to prophesy in the reign of Uzziah. The foregoing extract from his writings shews, that the people of Judah, as well as those of Israel, acted with great ingratitude to the LORD. How affectionate is this address to them, like that of a tender father, endeavouring to reclaim a disobedient child. It is suited not only to the people of Judah, but to all other nations, who are guilty of the same crimes.

SECTION LXXXIV.

THE REIGN OF ZECHARIAH AND OF SHALLUM, KINGS
OF ISRAEL.

From 1 Kings, Chap. xv.

IN the thirty and eighth year of Uzziah king of Judah, did Zechariah the son of Jeroboam reign over Israel in Samaria.

And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, as his fathers had done: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

And Shallum the son of Jabesh conspired against him, and smote him before the people, and slew him, after he had reigned six months, and reigned in his stead.

And the rest of the acts of Zechariah, behold, they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

This was the word of the LORD, which he spake unto Jehu, saying, Thy sons shall sit on the throne of Israel unto the fourth generation. And so it came to pass.

Shallum the son of Jabesh began to reign in the nine and thirtieth year of Uzziah king of Judah, and he reigned a full month in Samaria.

For Menahem the son of Gadi went up from Tirzah, and came to Samaria, and smote Shallum the son of Jabesh in Samaria, and slew him, and reigned in his stead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is supposed by learned authors, and is noted in the margins of our Bibles, that there was an interregnum (or space of time when the nation was in a state of anarchy and confusion without any sovereign) for eleven years (others say for twenty-two years): perhaps there were disputes about the succession, and conspiracies formed by different factions, till at length Zechariah the son of Jeroboam was established; by which the LORD's promise to Jehu, *that his sons should sit on the throne to the fourth generation*, was fulfilled.

We find, however, that Zechariah was a very impious prince, and his reign was short: for God permitted him to be slain by one of his subjects, according to the prediction of the prophet Amos, which he spake many years before, as follows: *I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword* *.

Shallum was a wicked usurper, as well as an idolator,

* Amos vii. 9.

and God's judgment was in a very short time sent upon him ; for he was suffered to fall by the hand of Menahem, Zechariah's general, who was then besieging Tirzah. On hearing what Shallum had done, Menahem marched to Samaria, defeated and slew him, under pretence of avenging the death of his sovereign ; but, as it proved, to gratify his own ambitious views.

SECTION LXXXV.

THE HISTORY OF THE PROPHET JONAH.

From Chap. i, &c.

Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it ; for their wickedness is come up before me.

But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa : and he found a ship going to Tarshish : so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish, from the presence of the LORD.

But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.

Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them : but Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship ; and he lay, and was fast asleep.

So the ship-master came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper ? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us that we perish not.

And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots ; that we may know for whose cause this

evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.

Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us: what is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?

And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew: and I fear the LORD the GOD of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land.

Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? for the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD; because he had told them.

Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought and was tempestuous.

And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you; for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.

Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them.

Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee.

So they took up Jonah and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging.

Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.

Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

And

Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly.

And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Jonah lived in the kingdom of Israel in the reigns of Jehoash and Jeroboam the second.

Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire, at the time Jonah was sent thither, was one of the largest and most ancient cities in the world; supposed to have been built by Nimrod not long after the flood, and very soon after the tower of Babel; but afterwards greatly enlarged by Ninus, from whom it received its name. This city was situated upon the banks of the Tigris, and (according to learned authors) was in length about twenty-one miles, nine broad, and fifty-four round; it was surrounded with stately walls, and fortified with lofty towers, and is thought to have contained six hundred thousand persons.

The excuse which Jonah made for disobeying the Divine command, and endeavouring to fly from the presence of the LORD, was, that he apprehended the LORD would, through his infinite mercy and goodness, change his purpose in respect to Nineveh, and that then his prophet's predictions would be regarded as fictitious, and involve him in disgrace, if not in destruction. It certainly was very sinful in Jonah to think thus, as he might have been certain the LORD would do what was right and that, however he dealt with the Ninevites, he would protect his prophet. It pleased the LORD, therefore, to inflict such a punishment as should convince Jonah of his error, strengthen his faith, and give him credit with the world, who would be ready to listen to one that had been so wonderfully preserved.

Whether the fish which followed up Jonah was a whale or not, is uncertain. Many travellers describe some of this species, which they had seen, sufficiently large to swallow a man : and informs us of various sea-monsters beside, of most enormous size. Jonah's situation in the belly of the fish must have been very dreadful. The relation of his being kept alive in such a place would be perfectly incredible if we endeavoured to account for it in a natural way ; but if we impute it to the *miraculous power of God*, it is no longer so : for as *we* are able, with our limited capacities, to apply the creatures to our use in such a variety of ways, it cannot be unreasonable to suppose that the GREAT CREATOR can do with them *whatsoever seemeth good in his sight*. Those infidels, who disbelieve the Scriptures, turn such relations as this into ridicule ; but we shall do well in avoiding the society of such impious persons. Let us read these edifying histories with attention, and learn from them to reverence the SUPREME BEING, the LORD of all nature.

SECTION LXXXVI.

JONAH SENT AGAIN TO NINEVEH.

From Chap. iii, iv.

AND the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.

So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days journey.

And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried and said, Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

So

So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

And he caused it to be proclaimed, and published through Nineveh, by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing ; let them not feed, nor drink water.

But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God : yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands.

Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not ?

And God saw their works that they turned from their evil way : and God repented of the evil that he would do unto them, and he did it not.

But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.

And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country ? therefore I fled before unto Tarshish : for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.

Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me : for it is better for me to die, than to live.

Then said the Lord, Doest thou well to be angry ?

So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city.

And the LORD GOD prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceedingly glad of the gourd.

But GOD prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered.

And it came to pass when the sun did arise, that GOD prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.

And GOD said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death.

Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow: which came up in a night, and perished in a night:

And should not I spare Nineveh that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons, that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand, and also much cattle?

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The behaviour of the Ninevites was, on this occasion, exemplary in the highest degree; and it is mentioned by our Saviour himself in the New Testament*, to the reproach of Israel. We may learn from the happy effects of it, that public fasting and humiliation for national sin are pleasing to the LORD: not that He requires his creatures to be afflicted, any farther than may be conducive to their reformation, and to render them objects of his mercy and loving kindness.

* Matth. xii. 41.—Luke xi. 32.

Though

Though the LORD was in a peculiar manner the God of Israel, he did not utterly forsake the rest of the world ; the wonders which God wrought for his own people were done *openly*. In the wars with Israel, the heathens frequently heard the prophets, and were eye-witnesses of many miracles ; but they hardened their hearts against conviction : notwithstanding this (we have reason to think) they were not brought to utter destruction without *particular* warnings, of which we read many instances.

It appears from Jonah's anger, that he was more solicitous for his own reputation, than for the honour of the LORD. This part of his conduct deserves censure. His history teaches us to reflect on the omnipresence of God, and to say with the Royal Psalmist, *Whither shall we go from Thy Spirit ? or whither shall we flee from thy presence ? If we ascend up into heaven, Thou art there ; if we go down to the place of the dead, Thou art there also. If we take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall Thy hand lead us, and Thy right hand shall hold us * !*

SECTION LXXXVII.

THE REIGN OF MENAHEM, PEKAIAH, AND PEKAH,
KINGS OF ISRAEL.

From 2 Kings, Chap. xv.

THEN Menahem smote Tipsah, and all that were therein, and the coasts thereof to Tirzah ; because they opened not unto him.

In the nine and thirtieth year of Azariah king of Judah, began Menahem the son of Gadi to reign over Israel.

* Psalm cxxxix. 7.

And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD : he departed not all his days from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

And Pul the king of Assyria came against the land : and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, that his hand might be with him, to confirm the kingdom in his hand.

And Menahem exacted the money of Israel, even of all the mighty men of wealth, of each man fifty shekels of silver, to give to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria turned back, and stayed not there in the land.

And Menahem reigned ten years in Samaria, and he slept with his fathers : and Pekaiiah his son reigned in his stead.

In the fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah, Pekaiiah the son of Menahem began to reign over Israel in Samaria ; and reigned two years ;

And did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD : he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

But Pekah the son of Remaliah, a captain of his, conspired against him, and smote him in Samaria, in the palace of the king's house, with Argob, and Arieah, and with him fifty men of the Gileadites : and he killed him, and reigned in his room.

In the two and fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah, Pekah the son of Remaliah began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned twenty years.

And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD : he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abel-beth-maachah, and Janoah, and Kadesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and

and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria.

And Hoshea the son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and smote him, and slew him, and reigned in his stead.

In the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah king of Judah, when Pekah had reigned twenty years.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Menahem was a monster of barbarity ; his ambition would endure no opposition, as his miserable subjects experienced to their sorrow !

TIRZAH, which is frequently mentioned in Scripture, was for a long time the *regal* city of the kingdom of Israel. Jeroboam, who was the first king of Israel after the division of the tribes (though he dwelt for some time at Shechem), resided there in his latter days at least, as did all the other kings of Israel, until Omri, having reigned six years in Tirzah, built Samaria, and removed the royal seat thither, where it continued till a final period was put to the kingdom. Tipsah, where Menahem exercised so much cruelty, is supposed to have been a town near to Tirzah.

There is no occasion to comment on the reign of Pekaiah ; for what has been remarked of former kings, whose characters and fate resembled his, may be applied to him.

Pekah's reign is rendered remarkable by the captivity of the tribe of Naphtali, and a considerable part of the kingdom of Israel.

As we shall in the ensuing history frequently read of the Assyrians, it will be proper, before we proceed, to give a short account of the origin of the second Assyrian monarchy. PUL, the king mentioned in this section,
S 6. appears.

appears (according to scripture) to have been the founder of it ; and we have reason to think, that he was raised up to great power, in the same manner as Hazael king of Syria had been, that he might be instrumental to the punishment of the israelites, for their abominable idolatry and profaneness. For we do not read in sacred history of any king of Assyria till this period ; and it had been foretold, by the prophet Amos in particular, above twenty years before, that *GOD would raise up a nation that should humble the house of Israel*, at that time elated with their success against Damascus and Hamath : but what nation he names not ; from which we may imply, that it did not then subsist, because we find that succeeding prophets frequently mention the Assyrians. *PUL* is supposed to have reigned at Nineveh, and to have been either that king to whom Jonah preached, or, most likely, his son. What particular conquests he gained we are not told ; but there is reason to think, that he either vanquished or received voluntary homage from Syria and other nations, as well as from Israel. Perhaps Pul was rendered eminent, and permitted to molest Israel, as a reward for his repentance and that of the Ninevites.

The new monarchy of the Assyrians gained ground under the government of *TIGLATH-PILESER*, who is supposed to have been the son and successor of *PUL*.

SECTION LXXXVIII.

PART OF THE PROPHECY OF HOSEA.

From Chap. vii, &c.

WHEN I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria : for they commit falshood, and the thief cometh in, and the troop of robbers spoileth without.

And

And they consider not in their hearts, that I remember all their wickedness : now their own doings have beset them about ; they are before my face.

They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies.

Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart : they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.

When they shall go, I will spread my net upon them ; I will bring them down as the fowls of the heaven : I will chastise them as their congregation hath heard.

Woe unto them ! for they have fled from me : destruction unto them ! because they have transgressed against me : though I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against me.

And they have not cried unto me with their heart when they howled upon their beds : they assemble themselves for corn and wine, and they rebel against me.

Though I have bound and strengthened their arms, yet do they imagine mischief against me.

They return, but not to the Most High : they are like a deceitful bow : their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue. This shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.

Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off ; mine anger is kindled against them : how long will it be ere they attain to innocency ?

For from Israel was it also ; the workman made it : therefore it is not God : but the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces.

For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind ; it hath not stalk ; the bud shall yield no meal : if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up.

Israel is swallowed up : now shall they be among the Gentiles as a vessel wherein is no pleasure.

For

For they are gone up to Assyria, a wild ass alone by himself: Ephraim hath hired lovers.

Yea, though they have hired among the nations, now will I gather them, and they shall sorrow a little for the burden of the king of princes.

Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall be upon him to sin.

I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing.

They sacrifice flesh for the sacrifices of mine offerings, and eat it; but the LORD accepteth them not: now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins; they shall return to Egypt.

For Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples; and Judah hath multiplied fenced cities: but I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour the palaces thereof.

They shall not dwell in the LORD's land; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean things in Assyria.

My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him: and they shall be wanderers among the nations.

For now they shall say, We have no king, because we feared not the LORD: what then should a king do to us?

O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.

Take with you words, and turn to the LORD; say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.

Ashur shall not save us: we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.

I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from them.

I will

I will be as the dew unto Israel ; he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.

His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon.

They that dwell under his shadow shall return ; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine : the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.

Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols ? I have heard him, and observed him : I am like a green fir-tree : from me is thy fruit found.

Who is wise, and he shall understand these things ? prudent, and he shall know them ? for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them : but the transgressors shall fall therein.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

By these extracts from Hosea, who prophesied in the reigns of the kings, whose history has just been related, we may perceive why the LORD resolved to bring judgments on the land of Israel.

From the beginning of this section we find, that they were warned not to go down to Egypt and Assyria for help : and that the *great offence* of the Israelites was worshipping idols, the golden calf in particular. The punishment threatened for these crimes appears perfectly just and proper for those who had forsaken their MAKER.

In the latter part of this section, the prophet calls on the people to repent and return to the LORD, and furnishes them with a prayer, very suitable to their necessities ; he then, in the name of their all-merciful GOD, promises blessings to those who should be truly penitent ; and under the emblem of a green flourishing fig-tree, foretells the reformation of Israel from idolatry, and their consequent prosperity.

The

The prophet concludes by saying, that whosoever is wise and prudent, that is, all those who are truly religious, and desirous of knowing the ways of the LORD, shall understand these things. Such persons (as the psalmist says) *will observe these things* *. They will meditate on the mercies and judgments of God, that they may learn how to obtain the one, and to escape the other.

SECTION LXXXIX.

THE REIGN OF JOTHAM KING OF JUDAH.

From 2 Kings, Chap. xv. 2 Chron. Chap. xxvii.

IN the second year of Pekah the son of Remaliah king of Israel, began Jotham the son of Uzziah king of Judah to reign.

And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD: he did according to all that his father Uzziah had done, however he entered not into the temple of the LORD, and the people yet did corruptly.

Howbeit, the high places were not removed: the people sacrificed and burned incense still on the high places. He built the higher gate of the house of the LORD, and the wall of Ophel.

Moreover, he built cities in the mountains of Judah and in the forests he built castles and towers.

He fought also with the king of Ammonites, and prevailed against them. And the children of Ammon gave him the same year an hundred talents of silver, and ten thousand measures of wheat, and ten thousand of barley. So much did the children of Ammon pay unto him, both the second and third. So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the LORD his God.

* Psalm cvii. 43.

(In those days the LORD began to send against Judah Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah.)

Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all his wars, and his ways, lo, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.

He was five and twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem.

And Jotham slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David. And Ahaz his son reigned in his stead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

By Jotham's doing right in the sight of the LORD we can only understand, that he kept from idolatry, and worshipped the LORD; for he did not do much towards the reformation of his kingdom, his chief attention was given to the fortifying it, and subduing his enemies; however in these things he proceeded agreeably to the will of the LORD; therefore he is ranked among the good kings of Judah.

SECTION XC.

THE BEGINNING OF THE REIGN OF AHAZ KING OF JUDAH.

From Isaiah, Chap. vii.

In the seventeenth year of Pekah the son of Remaliah, Ahaz the son of Jotham king of Judah began to reign.

And it was told the house of David saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind.

Then said the LORD unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou and Shear-jashub thy son, at the end of the conduit

conduit of the upper pool in the high way of the fuller's field :

And say unto him, take heed, and be quiet ; fear not, neither be faint-hearted for the two tails of the smoking fire-brands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah :

Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against thee, saying, Let us go up against Judah and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal :

Thus saith the LORD GOD, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass.

For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin : and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people.

And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.

Moreover, the LORD spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy GOD, ask it either in the depth or in the height above.

But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD.

And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David ; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my GOD also ?

Therefore the LORD himself shall give you a sign : Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel.

Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good : for before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good ; the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings.

The

The LORD shall bring upon thee and upon thy people and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah, even the king of Assyria.

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria.

And they shall come, and shall rest all of them in the desolate valleys, and in the holes of the rocks, and upon all thorns, and upon all bushes.

In the same day shall the LORD shave with a razor, that is hired, namely, by them beyond the river, by the king of Assyria, the head, and the hair of the feet : and it shall also consume the beard.

The LORD spake to me also again, saying,

Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloh that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin, and Remaliah's son ; Now therefore, behold, the LORD bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory : and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks :

And he shall pass through Judah ; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck ; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Emmanuel.

Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces : and give ear, all ye of far countries ; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces.

Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought : speak the word, and it shall not stand ; for God is with us.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

No king ever had greater incitements to obedience than Ahaz had, or more opportunities of doing good ; for at the time of his accession to the throne his kingdom
was

was in a very flourishing state, and the true religion established. We have reason to think that he had had a good education, as well as a good example from his father; besides these advantages, Ahaz was particularly encouraged to fear and serve the LORD, by the gracious message sent to him at the beginning of his reign by the prophet Isaiah, when he dreaded the united forces of Israel and Syria.

After the prophet Isaiah had assured Ahaz that the enemies he dreaded, should not prevail against him, in order to convince this king that the final end of the Jewish state was not so near as he apprehended; and at the same time to give a remarkable prophecy to the world; the LORD (by the mouth of his prophets, as we may suppose) desired Ahaz to ask for a sign, though ever so difficult, and it should be granted. But Ahaz, whether out of respect, or despondency and unbelief, refusing to ask for a sign, the prophet assured him from the LORD, that before the end of the Jewish state, Emmanuel (or God with us), the promised SAVIOUR *, should be born, in a miraculous manner, and the kingdom of Ephraim and Assyria destroyed.

The prophet also foretold the future desolation of the land of Israel and Judah by the kings of Egypt and Assyria.

The king of Assyria is here stiled the *hired razor*. This is a symbolical expression, signifying that the LORD would employ this monarch as his instrument to punish the Jews and allow him to take the spoil of the country as wages for his service. The *head, feet, and beard*, implied the different ranks of people from the highest to the lowest that composed the nation. These God threatened to cut off by the hand of the king of Assyria. And the kings of Judah and Israel were warned that their forming confederacies and alliances with other nations would not be of advantage to them, but the contrary.

* Matthew i. 23.

SECTION XCI.

THE WICKEDNESS OF AHAZ. NUMBERS OF THE PEOPLE OF JUDAH SLAIN AND CARRIED INTO CAPTIVITY.

From 2 Chronicles, Chap. xxviii.

AHAZ was twenty years old when he began to reign.

But he did not that which was right in the eyes of the LORD.

For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for Baalim.

Moreover, he burned incense in the valley of the son of Hinnon, and burned his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.

He sacrificed also and burned incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.

Wherefore the LORD his GOD delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria : and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captives, and brought them to Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter.

For Pekah the son of Remaliah slew in Judah an hundred and twenty thousand in one day, which were all valiant men ; because they had forsaken the LORD GOD of their fathers.

And Zichri, a mighty man of Ephraim, slew Maaseiah the king's son, and Azricam the governor of the house, and Elkanah that was next to the king.

And the children of Israel carried away captive of their brethren two hundred thousand women, sons and daughters, and took also away much spoil from them, and brought the spoil to Samaria.

But a prophet of the LORD was there, whose name was Oded ;

Oded ; and he went out before the host that came to Samaria, and said unto them, Behold, because the LORD God of your fathers was wroth with Judah, he hath delivered them into your hand, and ye have slain them in a rage, that reacheth up unto heaven.

And now ye purpose to keep under the children of Judah and Jerusalem for bondmen and bond-women unto you : but are there not with you, even with you, sins, against the LORD your God ?

Now hear me therefore, and deliver the captives again, which ye have taken captive of your brethren : for the fierce wrath of the LORD is upon you.

Then certain of the heads of the children of Ephraim, Azariah the son of Johanan, Berechiah the son of Meshillemoth, and Jehizkiah the son of Shallum, and Amasa the son of Hadlai, stood up against them that came from the war.

And said unto them, Ye shall not bring in the captives hither : for whereas we have offended against the LORD already, ye intend to add more to our sins and to our trespass ; for our trespass is great, and there is fierce wrath against Israel.

So the armed men left the captives and the spoil before the princes and all the congregation.

And the men which were expressed by name rose up, and took the captives, and with the spoil clothed all that were naked among them, and arrayed them, and shod them, and gave them to eat and to drink, and anointed them, and carried all the feeble of them upon asses, and brought them to Jericho the city of palm trees, to their brethren : then they returned to Samaria.

At that time Rezin king of Syria recovered Elath to Syria, and drove the Jews from Elath ; and the Syrians came to Elath, and dwelt there unto this day.

ANNOTATIONS

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is needless to comment on the wickedness of Ahaz, as the enormity of his guilt is so apparent; but we may observe, that it was greatly aggravated by his inattention to the goodness of the LORD who sent his prophet to him. Pekah, king of Israel, was very inveterate against Judah; and there is no knowing to what extremities he would have proceeded, if he had not been restrained by a prophet.

It is shocking to read of wars between those who were so nearly related, and who sprang from the same stock. From the prophet's reproof to the Israelites of Samaria, we may learn, that when unhappy animosities prevail among those who are properly *one people*, all cruelty and oppression should be avoided by the victors. They should call to mind, that the conquered are brethren, and on no account keep them in captivity, or delight in destroying their country. The method which the heads of Ephraim took, in administering to the necessities of the unfortunate prisoners, was truly noble, and worthy of imitation.

SECTION XCII.

IMPIETY OF AHAZ—HIS DEATH.

From 2 Chron. Chap. xxviii.—2 Kings, Chap. xvi.

AT that time did king Ahaz send unto the kings of Assyria to help him.

For again the Edomites had come and smitten Judah, and carried away captives.

The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the low country, and of the south of Judah, and had taken Bethshemesh

shemesh and Ajalon, and Gederoth, and Shocho, with the villages thereof, Timnah with the villages thereof, Gimzo also, and the villages thereof : and they dwelt there.

For the LORD brought Judah low, because of Ahaz king of Israel : for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the LORD.

So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, saying, I am thy servant and thy son : come up and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria, and out of the hand of the king of Israel, which rise up against me.

And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king's house, and sent it for a present to the king of Assyria.

And the king of Assyria hearkened unto him : for the king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried the people of it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin.

And Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, came unto him, and distressed him, but strengthened him not.

For Ahaz took away a portion out of the house of the LORD, and out of the house of the king, and of the princes, and gave it unto the king of Assyria : but he helped him not.

And king Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and saw an altar that was at Damascus : and king Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest the fashion of the altar, and the pattern of it, according to all the workmanship thereof.

And Urijah the priest built an altar according to all that king Ahaz had sent from Damascus : so Urijah the priest made it against king Ahaz came from Damascus.

And when the king was come from Damascus, the king saw the altar : and the king approached to the altar, and offered thereon.

And

And he burned his burnt-offering and his meat-offering, and poured his drink-offering, and sprinkled the blood of his peace-offerings upon the altar.

And he brought also the brazen altar which was before the LORD, from the fore-front of the house, from between the altar and the house of the LORD, and put it on the north side of the altar.

And king Ahaz commanded Urijah the priest, saying, Upon the great altar burn the morning burnt-offering, and the evening meat-offering; and the king's burnt-sacrifice, and his meat-offering; with the burnt-offering, of all the people of the land, and their meat-offering, and their drink-offerings; and sprinkle upon it all the blood of the burnt-offering, and all the blood of the sacrifice: and the brazen altar shall be for me to enquire by.

Thus did Urijah the priest, according to all that king Ahaz commanded.

And king Ahaz cut off the borders of the bases, and removed the laver from off them; and took down the sea from off the brazen oxen that were under it, and put it upon a pavement of stones.

And the covert for the sabbath that they had built in the house, and the king's entry without, turned he from the house of the LORD, for the king of Assyria.

And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the LORD: this is that king Ahaz.

For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus which smote him: and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him and of all Israel.

And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of

GOD, and shut up the doors of the house of the LORD, and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem.

And in every several city of Judah he made high places to burn incense unto other gods, and provoked to anger the LORD GOD of his fathers.

And Ahaz reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem, and he slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, even in Jerusalem : but they brought him not into the sepulchres of the kings of Israel. And Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is evident that Ahaz either forgot, or paid no regard to, the threatenings of the prophet, that the king of Assyria should be *a hired razor* to cut off the house of Israel and Judah. For when he found himself oppressed by enemies on every side, instead of applying to the LORD for relief, he put himself under subjection to this very monarch, and endeavoured to hire his friendship with those treasures, which were appropriated to the LORD. His impious views were however defeated ; for Tiglath-Pileser, instead of assisting Ahaz, *came up and distressed him, but strengthened him not*. It is supposed that he turned his whole force against Syria, and that, after killing Rezin the king of Damascus, he seized on that place, which was the capital city, and put an end to the kingdom of Syria.

What shocking impieties did Ahaz commit ! That of removing the altar was a presumptuous breach of the Divine law ; and his paying adoration to the gods of Syria, was an open act of rebellion against the KING OF KINGS.

Ahaz had a very unquiet reign. What death he died is not mentioned ; but it is evident that his memory was

was abhorred by his subjects, for he was not allowed an honourable burial in the sepulchres of the kings of Israel ; but was interred like a private person.

SECTION XCIII.

THE BEGINNING OF THE REIGN OF HEZEKIAH

KING OF JUDAH.

From 2 Chronicles, Chap. xxix.

Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign.

Hezekiah began to reign when he was five and twenty years old.

And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done.

He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made ; for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it ; and he called it Nehushtan.

He, in the first year of his reign, in the first month opened the doors of the house of the LORD, and repaired them.

And he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them together into the east street, and said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the LORD GOD of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place ;

For our fathers have trespassed, and done that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD our God, and have forsaken him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the LORD, and turned their backs :

Also they have shut up the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps, and have not burned incense, nor offered burnt-offerings in the holy place, unto the God of Israel.

Wherefore the wrath of the LORD was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and he hath delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing, as ye see with your eyes.

For lo, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons, and our daughters, and our wives, are in captivity for this.

Now it is mine heart to make a covenant with the LORD God of Israel, that his fierce wrath may turn away from us.

My sons, be not now negligent : for the LORD hath chosen you to stand before him, to serve him, and that ye should minister unto him, and burn incense.

Then the Levites arose, and gathered their brethren, and sanctified themselves, and cleansed the house of the LORD.

Then they went in to Hezekiah the king, and said, We have cleansed all the house of the LORD, and the altar of burnt-offering with all the vessels thereof, and the shew-bread table, with all the vessels thereof.

Moreover, all the vessels which king Ahaz in his reign did cast away in his transgression, have we prepared and sanctified, and behold, they are before the altar of the LORD.

Then Hezekiah the king rose early, and gathered the rulers of the city, and went up to the house of the LORD.

And they offered sacrifices and burnt-offerings for all Israel, by the king's commandment.

And he set the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer,
and

and Nathan the prophet ; for so was the commandment of the LORD by his prophets.

And the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets.

And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt-offering upon the altar. And when the burnt-offering began, the song of the LORD began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David king of Israel.

And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded : and all this continued until the burnt-offering was finished. So the service of the house was set in order.

And when they had made an end of offering, the king and all that were present with him bowed themselves and worshipped.

And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that GOD had prepared the people : for the thing was done suddenly.

So there was great joy in Jerusalem ; for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem.

Then the priests the Levites arose, and blessed the people : and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to his holy dwelling-place, even unto heaven.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The good Hezekiah had been an associate with his father in the last year of his reign, and, without doubt, had beheld with great concern the neglect of GOD's worship, but he could not begin the reformation of the kingdom during the life of Ahaz.

Hezekiah was very sensible that the miseries which had fallen on the land of Judah were a just punishment

for their wickedness, and the consequence of their breach of the COVENANT, which the LORD had on his part so punctually performed : and he was very solicitous to renew the covenant, knowing that the LORD had promised he would turn to his people whenever they should seek him with a perfect heart, and forsake the sins which had rendered them abominable in his sight. The speech which the good king made to the priests and Levites needs no explanation, and it had the intended effect.

We find that the people of Israel had even made the brazen serpent, which Moses set up in the wilderness, an object of adoration ; Hezekiah therefore thought it necessary to destroy it.

The good king * next resolved to keep the passover, and, willing to extend his benevolence to the whole race of Jacob, he sent to all the tribes, to give them notice of his intention ; and though the land of Israel was in general immersed in idolatry, there were still some who gladly obeyed the summons, and assisted at the solemnity.

That the feast of unleavened bread might be enjoyed by the poor as well as by the rich, Hezekiah himself made ample provision for it by his liberality, and every heart rejoiced in the hopes of God's returning favour ; their repentance found a gracious reception at the throne of mercy, and the BLESSING of the LORD was again restored to his people.

These religious exercises had a proper effect on the minds of the Israelites, and they proceeded to destroy all the monuments of idolatry that remained. Hezekiah took care to renew the service of the Temple according to the original institution of it, and to provide

* See 2 Chron. ii. xxx.

for the maintenance of the priests and Levites. Judah was once more in an honourable and prosperous condition, and had every encouragement to be faithful to the LORD.

SECTION XCIV.

PART OF THE PROPHECY OF ISAIAH.

ADDRESSED TO THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL.

From Chap. xxx.

WOE to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin.

That walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt!

Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion.

For his princes were at Zoan, and his ambassadors came to Hanes.

They were all ashamed of a people that could not profit them, nor be an help nor profit, but a shame, and also a reproach.

Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit. When the LORD shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they all shall fall together.

For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose: therefore have I cried concerning this, their strength is to sit still.

Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it

in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever :

That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the LORD :

Which say to the seers, See not ; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits :

Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.

Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon :

Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant.

And he shall break it as the breaking of the potter's vessel, that is broken in pieces ; he shall not spare, so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a sherd to take fire from the hearth, or to take water withal out of the pit.

For thus saith the LORD GOD, the Holy One of Israel, in returning and rest shall ye be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength : and ye would not.

But ye said, No ; for we will flee upon horses ; therefore shall ye flee : and we will ride upon the swift ; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It was certainly foreknown to the LORD, that the Israelites would endeavour to form an alliance against the Assyrians, with the king of Egypt, and he graciously warned them not to take a measure so improper for those to pursue, who, as the descendants of Abraham,
Isaac,

Isaac, and Jacob, might with confidence seek Divine aid, if they would repent and return unto the LORD their God. The consequences that would follow their acting otherwise are here strongly pointed out ; and the offences for which the LORD resolved to desert them, and leave them as a prey to their enemies, are particularly enumerated.

SECTION XCV.

THE CONCLUSION OF THE REIGN OF HOSEA KING OF ISRAEL.

From 2 Kings, Chap. xvii.

AND Hoshea still reigned over Israel : against him came up Shalmanezar king of Assyria, and Hoshea became his servant, and gave him presents.

And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea : for he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and brought no present to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year ; therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison.

Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years.

In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the city of the Medes ;

Because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD their God, but transgressed his covenant, and all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded, and would not hear them, nor do them.

For they served idols, whereof the LORD had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing.

Yet the LORD testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments, and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets.

Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the LORD their God.

Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight : there was none left but the tribe of Judah only.

So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

After the death of Tiglath-Pileser, Shalmanezar succeeded to the throne of Assyria, who obliged Hoshea to become tributary to him. So, king of Egypt, was originally an Ethiopian, but he had lately invaded Egypt, and taken the king of that country prisoner, whom he caused to be burnt alive, and then seizing his kingdom, reigned there in his stead. So soon became powerful, and Hoshea, king of Israel, notwithstanding the warnings of Isaiah, entered into a confederacy with him, hoping, by his assistance, to free himself from Assyrian bondage ; and in consequence of this, he withdrew his subjection from Shalmanezar, and would pay him no more tribute ; and on this account it was, that the king of Assyria invaded Samaria. The people of Israel had so repeatedly rebelled against the LORD, and were become so incorrigibly wicked, that God deserted them, and they were left a prey to the Assyrians as they had been threatened.

Had

Had the Israelites repented like the Ninevites at the preaching of the prophet, there is no doubt but that they also would have been saved from destruction. The LORD would have restrained the fierce wrath of the Assyrian king, who was, though he knew it not, the *rod of Divine anger**. But as neither kindness nor severity could reform this rebellious nation, they were justly exposed to the consequences of their disobedience, and the Israelitish kingdom was brought to an end, after it had stood divided from that of Judah two hundred and fifty-four years. A great number of the Israelites escaped with their lives ; some into Egypt, but more into the kingdom of Judah, where they weaned themselves by degrees from their idolatries, and became subjects to Hezekiah, and his successors. It is needless to mention the various conjectures of different authors respecting the countries to which the captive Jews were transported, as it is a point of no importance to us, and impossible to be exactly ascertained.

SECTION XCVI.

THE CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF HEZEKIAH
KING OF JUDAH.

From 2 Kings, Chap. xviii.—2 Chron. Chap. xxxii.

AND Hezekiah trusted in the LORD GOD of Israel ; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.

For he clave to the LORD, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses,

And the LORD was with him ; and he prospered

* Isaiah x.

whithersoever he went forth, and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not.

He smote the Philistines, even unto Gaza, and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.

Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them.

And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish, saying, I have offended : return from me : that which thou puttest on me, I will bear. And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver, and thirty talents of gold.

And Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king's house.

At that time did Hezekiah cut off the gold from the doors of the temple of the LORD, and from the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria.

After these things and the establishment thereof, Sennacherib king of Assyria came once more, and entered into Judah, and encamped against the fenced cities, and thought to win them for himself.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

“ It appears, that whilst the king of Assyria was employed against Samaria, Hezekiah took the opportunity of recovering what had been lost from his kingdom in his father's reign ; and had such success against the Philistines in particular, that he not only regained the cities of Judah, which they had seized during the time that Pekah king of Israel, and Rezin king of Syria, distressed the
the

the land, but he even dispossessed them of almost all their own country, except Gaza and Gath :” these successes encouraged Hezekiah to refuse the tribute which Ahaz, his father, had agreed to pay to the king of Assyria, who, it is thought, was diverted from his purpose of invading him at this time, by a war in which he was engaged with the king of Tyre, and who died before the conclusion of it. Shalmanezar was succeeded by his son Sennacherib, who renewed the demand, and on Hezekiah’s refusal, came against him with a very powerful army, and took from him a great number of fortified cities, in so short a time, as seemed to threaten the total ruin of his whole kingdom. Hezekiah was terrified by these losses, into a speedy submission, and sent an embassy acknowledging himself in fault, and promising to submit to whatever terms the conqueror should impose. Sennacherib was by these means induced to withdraw his army for the present, and to give up the cities he had taken. The penalty he inflicted amounted to 350,000*l.* of our money. This Hezekiah could not pay, without taking some of the treasures devoted to the LORD, and even stripping the temple of the ornaments which his own piety had dedicated. We may suppose, that he took this measure inconsiderately, and not presumptuously like Ahaz ; but it certainly was a very wrong one for him, as king of Judah, to have recourse to, nor did it go unchastised. The respite Hezekiah had so dearly bought, lasted but a short time, for the treacherous Assyrian king, who was still at Lachish, soon after sent his army again to besiege the cities of Judah.

It was foretold in the reign of Ahaz, by the prophet Isaiah, that the Assyrian king should be the instrument of inflicting God’s judgments on the people of Israel, of all ranks and denominations. We have already seen how

how truly this prediction was fulfilled in respect to those of Samaria ; and we now find the divine threatenings operating against those of Jerusalem. That the people might regard the Assyrian monarch as the scourge of Divine vengeance, the prophet Isaiah was commissioned to proclaim him as such.

SECTION XCVII.

PART OF THE PROPHECY OF ISAIAH.

From Chap. x.

O ASSYRIAN, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation.

I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.

Howbeit, he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so : but it is in his heart to destroy, and cut off nations not a few. For he saith, Are not my princes altogether kings ? Is not Calno as Carchemish ; is not Hamath as Arpad ? is not Samaria as Damascus ? As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, and whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria ; Shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols ?

Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the LORD hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.

For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom ; for I am prudent : and I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures, and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant

valiant man: And my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people; and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped.

Shall the ax boast itself against him that heweth therewith; or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood.

Therefore shall the LORD, the LORD of hosts send among his fat ones leanness; and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire.

And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame: and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day; And shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body: and they shall be as when a standard-bearer fainteth.

And the rest of the trees of his forest shall be few, that a child may write them.

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them: but shall stay upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.

The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God.

For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return: the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness.

For the LORD GOD of host shall make a consumption, even determined in the midst of all the land.

Therefore thus saith the LORD GOD of hosts, O my people, that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian: he shall smite thee with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of Egypt.

For

For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease, and mine anger, in their destruction.

And the LORD of hosts shall stir up a scourge for him, according to the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb: and as his rod was upon the sea, so shall he lift it up after the manner of Egypt.

And it shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

This part of Isaiah's prophecy is supposed to have been written after the destruction of Samaria. It was calculated to encourage the king and people of Judah to put their trust and confidence in the LORD; and to comfort those who had escaped from Samaria, and taken refuge in the kingdom of Judah, with hopes that they should be saved with the rest of God's faithful people, from the wrath of the proud king of Assyria.

How vain are tyrants of their power, and of their conquests! and yet what is the mightiest of them but the *Rod of God's anger*, and the staff of his indignation?

SECTION XCVIII.

HEZEKIAH'S SICKNESS.

From 2 Kings, Chap. xx. Isaiah, Chap. xxxviii.

IN those days, when Sennacherib king of Assyria came and encamped against the fenced cities of Judah, and thought to win them for himself, was Hezekiah sick unto death.

And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thy house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live.

Then

Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, saying, I beseech thee, O LORD, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.

And it came to pass afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the LORD came to him, saying, Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of my people, Thus saith the LORD, the GOD of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears : behold, I will heal thee : on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the LORD.

And I will add unto thy days fifteen years : and I will deliver thee and this city, out of the hand of the king of Assyria : and I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

And Hezekiah said unto Isaiah, What shall be the sign that the LORD will heal me, and that I shall go up into the house of the LORD the third day ? And Isaiah said, This sign shalt thou have of the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing that he hath spoken ; shall the shadow go forward ten degrees, or go back ten degrees ?

And Hezekiah answered, It is a light thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees : nay, but let the shadow return backward ten degrees.

And Isaiah the prophet cried unto the LORD : and he brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz.

And Isaiah said, Take a lump of figs and lay them for a plaister ; and they took and laid it on the boil, and Hezekiah recovered. And this is the writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness.

I said in the cutting-off of my days, I shall go to the
gates

gates of the grave : I am deprived of the residue of my years.

I said, I shall not see the LORD, even the LORD, in the land of the living : I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world.

Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent : I have cut off like a weaver my life : he will cut me off with pining sickness : from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.

I reckoned till morning, that as a lion so will he break all my bones : from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.

Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter : I did mourn as a dove ; mine eyes fail with looking upward : O LORD, I am oppressed ; undertake for me.

What shall I say ? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it : I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul.

O LORD, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit ; so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live.

Behold, for peace I had great bitterness : but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption : for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.

For the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee : they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.

The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day : the father to the children shall make known thy truth.

The LORD was ready to save me : therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the LORD.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The disease with which Hezekiah was afflicted was, as we may reasonably suppose, designed as a farther chastisement for his stripping the Temple, and submitting to Sennacherib ; it was in its nature mortal, and above the power of human art to cure ; the prophet Isaiah was sent to apprise him of his danger, that he might settle his worldly affairs, and prepare his mind for the awful change which he was soon to experience.

Besides the love of life, so natural to all men, Hezekiah had many reasons to make him particularly desirous of it at that time. The Assyrian power threatened to overwhelm his kingdom, and he had as yet no son to succeed him, which was a circumstance of great affliction, as he was the last of the royal family of David. He saw ruin and desolation likely to fall on his country, and had reason to fear he was under the displeasure of God, as length of days was a part of the blessing which the Lord had promised to good kings : having these prospects before his eyes, he might well melt into tears at the thoughts of approaching death.

As king of Israel, Hezekiah might with propriety plead his adherence to the worship of the Lord, because the Lord had promised his favour on that condition. The sign which was granted to strengthen Hezekiah's faith was of a very extraordinary nature ; it is needless to give a particular description of the miracle, as it cannot be accounted for by natural means ; but however astonishing the relation of it may appear, it certainly was not too difficult for the ALMIGHTY to effect.

We may understand, from Hezekiah's own reflections, (which the prophet has transmitted to us) that his piety and humility were very great. His *writing*, as it is called, affords a very lively picture of what passed in his mind.

mind. The king appears to have been at first struck with horror and dismay at the thoughts that his life would be cut short, and that he should not live to see the deliverance which he trusted the LORD would effect for Judah. He dreaded the increase of pains and agonies, which were already more than nature could well sustain. He found no relief; but continued to lament his present misery, and approaching dissolution. He repeated his earnest supplication, that the LORD would grant him ease. He considered that it was the Divine will that he should be thus afflicted, and resolved to moderate the excess of his grief, and submit with patience. A ray of Divine consolation immediately darted into his mind. He now regarded this mortal sickness as the harbinger of life and immortality; he considered the death of the body as the birth of the soul; he felt a happy presentiment that he should not lie for ever in the grave. The SPIRIT of the LORD whispered to *his* spirit, that Divine mercy had redeemed him from that destruction which his repeated crimes deserved, and that the punishment of his sins was remitted. He called to mind the numberless promises which the LORD had made of everlasting blessings; and felt in his heart an ardent desire to praise the LORD for ever. He could not think that this desire, and the hope of immortality, inherent in the mind of man, would be extinguished by death; nor could he believe, when he reflected on the capacity of the human soul, that its existence was limited to this imperfect state: he therefore concluded, that it would survive the death of the body; and that he should in a future state celebrate the praises of the LORD. Hezekiah also appears to have had a presage that he should have a son to succeed him.

Had the good king died at this time, there is no doubt but he would have found his hopes respecting immor-
tality

talities confirmed ; but to shew the efficacy of prayer to reward him as a faithful king, and to do kindness to the people of Judah, his life was prolonged.

From the prophet's advice to Hezekiah, *to set his house in order*, all persons are admonished to settle their worldly concerns before their death, for the sake of their surviving friends. We may also from the prophet's example consider it as the duty of a friend to acquaint those who are in an irrecoverable state of their danger. How many through a mistaken tenderness are flattered, even to the last moments, into a belief that *they shall live and not die !* amused with company ; nay even tempted to waste those precious moments in card-playing, which should be employed in imploring Divine mercy for their numberless offences, they launch into eternity, unprepared, to meet their heavenly judge !

It is probable, that those who have led *good lives* will at first be affected with the awful tidings, as Hezekiah was ; but the consciousness of having endeavoured to perform their duty in an acceptable manner, will encourage them to have immediate recourse to prayer and meditation, which will produce a train of reflections similar to those of the good king. The sincere and humble christian will enjoy a still higher degree of consolation than Hezekiah could receive, because *life and immortality*, which were but imperfectly hoped for by the Jews, have been *brought to light by the Gospel*. So far from regretting that his days are cut short, the christian will resign his soul into the hands of his REDEEMER with joyful expectation ; not merely *hoping*, but well assured, *that in love to it his SAVIOUR has delivered it from the pit of corruption, and purchased remission for his sins ;* and that he shall certainly *see the LORD in the land of the living*.

Nor will the case of the abandoned sinner be made worse

worse by his being informed, that the hand of death is upon him. Without *repentance* there is no *remission for sins*, and though it is dangerous to defer the work of repentance to a death bed, it affords the only chance of procuring pardon for those who have before neglected it. Surely then it is cruelty to exclude any one from this opportunity of making his peace with his offended God. Divine mercy is infinite, and the example of the penitent thief on the cross affords encouragement to hope, that sincere contrition will never supplicate in vain.

The only objection that can reasonably be made to the measure here recommended is, that the agitation of mind such dreadful tidings will naturally produce may aggravate the disease. It should be remembered, that diseases come from God, whose mercy may humbly be expected to co-operate in such a case with the pious intentions of the friend. It may be proper also to reflect on the consternation which a soul unprepared must unavoidably experience immediately on its separation from the body, when no kind friend can administer the balm of consolation; when the day of grace is gone for ever! Great caution, however, should be used in mentioning a circumstance which cannot fail of striking the mind, even of the best of men, with awe and apprehension, and where there is great timidity of mind and weakness of body, and the person has lived a good life, it may we think with safety be omitted, trusting to the all-sufficient atonement and intercession of the Redeemer.

SECTION XCIX.

HEZEKIAH'S CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD.

From 2 Chron. Chap. xxxii.

AND when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib was come, and that he was purposed to fight against Jerusalem, he took counsel with his princes and his mighty men, to stop
the

the waters of the fountains which were without the city. And they did help him.

So there was gathered much people together, who stopped all the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land, saying, Why should the kings of Assyria come and find much water?

Also he strengthened himself, and built up all the wall that was broken, and raised it up to the towers, and another wall without, and repaired Millo in the city of David, and made darts and shields in abundance.

And he set captains of war over the people, and gathered them together to him in the street of the gate of the city, and spake comfortably to them, saying, Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him : for there be more with us than with him.

With him is an arm of flesh ; but with us is the LORD our God, to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Awakened to a proper sense of his duty, by the reflections which he had made in his illness, Hezekiah was no sooner recovered than he made all possible preparations for a brave defence of his kingdom ; he fortified Jerusalem, laid in great store of arms and provisions for the siege, and cut off, as much as possible, all supply of water from the enemy.

By the exhortations which the good king gave to his officers, we may understand, that his mind was full of faith and confidence in the power of the LORD.

SECTION C.

THE CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF HEZEKIAH
KING OF JUDAH.*From 2 Kings, Chap. xviii.*

AND the king of Assyria sent Tartan, and Rabсарis, and Rab-shakeh, from Lachish to king Hezekiah, with a great host against Jerusalem. And they went up and came to Jerusalem. And when they were come up, they came and stood by the conduit of the upper pool, which is in the high way of the fuller's field.

And when they had called to the king, there came out to them Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, which was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder.

And Rab-shakeh said unto them, Speak ye now to Hezekiah, thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest?

Thou sayest (but they are but vain words) I have counsel and strength for the war. Now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me? Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt, on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt unto all that trust on him.

But if ye say unto me, we trust in the LORD our God: is not that he whose high places, and whose altars, Hezekiah hath taken away, and hath said Judah and Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem? Now therefore, I pray thee, give pledges to my lord the king of Assyria, and I will deliver thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them.

How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain
of

of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust in Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? Am I now come up without the LORD against this place to destroy it? the LORD said to me, Go up against this land, and destroy it.

Then said Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, and Shebna, and Joah, unto Rab-shakeh, Speak, I pray thee, to thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand it: and talk not with us in the Jews language, in the ears of the people that are on the wall.

But Rab-shakeh said unto them, Hath my master sent me to thy master, and to thee, to speak these words? hath he not sent me to the men which set on the wall, that they may be punished with you? Then Rab-shakeh stood and cried with a loud voice in the Jews language, and spake, saying, Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria: Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you out of his hand.

Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us, and this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.

Hearken not unto Hezekiah. For thus saith the king of Assyria, Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me, and then eat ye every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig-tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his cistern? Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of oil-olive and of honey, that ye may live, and not die: and hearken not unto Hezekiah, when he persuadeth you, saying the LORD will deliver us.

Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? where are the gods

of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand? Who are they among all the gods of the countries that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand? But the people held their peace, and answered him not a word. For the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It seems that Sennacherib, after he had laid the plan for the siege of Jerusalem, went back to Lachish, and sent three of his generals with a very great army to conduct it.

The speech, which Rab-shakeh made to Hezekiah's ministers, was an open insult to the LORD GOD of Israel.

It does not appear that Hezekiah had any intention of seeking succours from Egypt; but as the king of Israel had formed an alliance with that nation, Rab-shakeh supposed the king of Judah would do the same.

It is very remarkable, that notwithstanding Rab shakeh affected to despise the LORD, he pretended to have been sent by Him to destroy His land. This circumstance seems to indicate, that Isaiah's prophecy, which foretold that the Assyrian power should be the scourge both of Israel and Judah, had been delivered so publicly, that Rab-shakeh had heard of it; and though he had no faith in the LORD, he might think proper to refer to the prophecy, in order to intimidate the king and people of Judah.

Rab-shakeh was a very eloquent man, and Eliakim had great reason to dread the effect of his plausible arguments, especially as the people of Judah had on so many occasions been persuaded to forsake the LORD and join with idolaters; and were in particular danger of being seduced at a time when such misfortunes threatened them as they could not by human means avert: but the good

good example of their excellent sovereign, and a regular attendance on public worship, had produced such happy effects on their minds, that they readily obeyed the command which Hezekiah had previously given, and listened to the vain boastings of Rab-shakeh with silent indignation. A great resemblance may be observed between the threats of the Assyrians, and those of the haughty power which is at this time *“the rod of God’s anger, the staff of his indignation.”*

SECTION CI.

HEZEKIAH’S HUMILIATION—HIS PRAYER.

From 2 Kings, Chap. xviii, xix.

THEN came Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, which was over the houshold, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder, to Hezekiah with their cloaths rent, and told him the words of Rab-shakeh.

And it came to pass when king Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his cloaths and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD.

And he sent Eliakim, which was over the houshold, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz.

And they said to him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy.

It may be the LORD thy GOD will hear all the words of Rab-shakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living GOD : and will reprove the words which the LORD thy GOD hath heard : wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that are left.

So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah.

And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say to your

master, Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me.

Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and shall return to his own land : and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

So Rab-shakeh returned and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah : for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish.

And when he heard say of Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia, Behold, he is come out to fight against thee : he sent messengers again unto Hezekiah, saying, Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.

Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the lands, by destroying them utterly : and shalt thou be delivered ? Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed ; as Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden, which were in Thelazar ? Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, of Henah, and Ivah ?

And Hezekiah received the letter of the hand of the messengers, and read it ; and Hezekiah went up into the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD.

And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said, O LORD GOD of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the GOD, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth ; thou hast made heaven and earth.

LORD, bow down thine ear, and hear : open, LORD, thine eyes and see : and hear the words of Sennacherib, who hath sent him to reproach the living GOD.

Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have destroyed
the

the nations and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire ; for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone ; therefore have they destroyed them.

Now therefore, O LORD our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD God, even thou only.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The behaviour of Hezekiah, when he received the insulting message of the Assyrian king, was perfectly suited to the occasion, and expressive of the sorrow he felt at the indignity offered to the LORD God.

The answer which Isaiah returned in the name of the LORD, must have afforded great consolation to the good king Hezekiah ; and his prediction, that Sennacherib *should hear a rumour*, and return to his own land, was soon verified ; for the Assyrian monarch was informed, that the king of Ethiopia intended to make war against him, on which he departed from Lachish to defend his own country, instead of going to the siege of Jerusalem, and when Rab-shakeh came to inform him of his late proceedings, he found Sennacherib fully engaged in another war ; however he wrote a haughty letter to Hezekiah, in which he repeated the message which Rab-shakeh had before delivered. Hezekiah justly considered this as a presumptuous defiance of the ALMIGHTY God, and prayed the LORD to take the cause into his own hands, and maintain the honour of his holy name, not doubting but that he could deliver him and his people from the power of the Assyrian king.

SECTION CII.

GOD'S MESSAGE TO HEZEKIAH.

From 2 Kings, Chap. xix.

THEN Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD GOD of Israel, That which thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria I have heard.

This is the word that the LORD hath spoken concerning him: The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn, the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee.

Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel.

By thy messengers thou hast reproached the LORD, and hast said, With the multitude of my chariots I am come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon, and will cut down the tall cedar-trees thereof, and the choice fir-trees thereof: and I will enter into the lodgings of his borders, and into the forest of his Carmel.

I have digged and drunk strange waters, and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of besieged places.

Hast thou not heard long ago how I have done it, and of ancient times that I have formed it? now have I brought it to pass that thou shouldest be to lay waste fenced cities into ruinous heaps.

Therefore the inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded; they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb, as the grass on the house-tops, and as corn blasted before it be grown up.

But

But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me.

Because thy rage against me and thy tumult is come up into mine ears, therefore I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.

And this shall be a sign unto thee, Ye shall eat this year such things as grow of themselves, and in the second year that which springeth of the same; and in the third year sow ye and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruits thereof.

And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall yet again take root downward, and bear fruit upward.

For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion; the zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this.

Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it.

By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the LORD.

For I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The prayer which Hezekiah had offered up, was so perfectly agreeable to the Divine will, and so suitable to his own character, as *captain of the LORD's inheritance*, that the prophet Isaiah was commissioned to comfort him immediately, with an assurance of the LORD's approbation and protection.

How awful was the message sent to the king of Assyria.

syria. We may suppose that it was publicly delivered, so that Rab-shakeh and the other generals, with their army, heard it. The latter part of the prediction was calculated to inspire fresh spirits into the people of Judah, who, without doubt, were in great consternation on account of the formidable army by which they were besieged.

SECTION CIII.

THE ASSYRIANS SMITTEN.

From 2 Kings. Chap. xix.

AND it came to pass that night that the angel of the LORD went out and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand : and when the people of Judah arose early in the morning, behold, their enemies were all dead corpses *.

So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.

And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword : and they escaped into the land of Armenia. And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The Divine promises made by the mouth of Isaiah, were soon fulfilled. It seems that Sennacherib shortly followed his letter, and was preparing to attack Jerusalem ; but before the Assyrians could have time to commit any hostilities, the greatest part of their army was miraculously smitten.

* I have taken the liberty of changing the expression here, according to the obvious meaning of the text.

“From this wonderful defeat of the mighty Assyrian army, we may learn, that as the LORD stills, at his pleasure, *the raging of the sea, and the noise of the waves*; in like manner *he stills the raging of the people*. When the passions of men are most inflamed, and their designs just ripe for bursting into execution, often by some unexpected interposition, he calls upon the world to observe, that there is ONE higher than the highest upon earth, who can frustrate their devices in a moment, and command *the earth to be still before him*. Proud fleets, destined to carry destruction to neighbouring kingdoms, may cover the ocean; He blows with his wind, and they are scattered. Mighty armies may go forth to the field in all the glory of human strength, but the issues of battle are with Him. He gives to some slight event the power of deciding the fate of nations. A thousand unseen ministers stand by to be the instruments of His power, in humbling the pride, and checking the efforts of the wrath of man; as in the instance of haughty Sennacherib, and that boasted tempest of his wrath, which he threatened to pour on all the Jewish nation. It was allowed to prevail against the Israelites, as a punishment for their incorrigible wickedness, and was employed as an instrument of discipline and correction to the king and people of Judah, in order to produce in them proper reflections upon their duty, and their past errors; as they wisely considered it in this light, and humbled themselves before the LORD, he graciously * *restrained the remainder of Sennacherib's wrath*; and made it the mean of advancing the temporal prosperity of his faithful people, and of confirming the truth of his holy religion and his almighty power.”

* Psalm lxxvi. 10.

“Let

“ Let this history, therefore, lead us to a religious contemplation of the hand of God, in all the transactions of the world. Let us not censure Providence, on account of any seeming disorders and evils which at present take place : the plans of Divine wisdom are too large and comprehensive to be discerned by us in all their extent ; and where we see only by parts, we must frequently be at a loss in judging of the whole. *The way of God is in the sea, and His path in the great waters ; His footsteps are not known.* But although thou sayest thou canst not see Him, yet judgment is before Him ; therefore trust thou in Him†.* Whatever distresses we suffer from *the wrath of man*, we have ground to believe that they befall us not in vain. Let us then study to gain the protection and favour of the ALMIGHTY. *If He be for us, who or what can be against us ?* Let us pursue the measures which He has appointed for obtaining His grace, by faith, repentance, and a holy life, and we shall have no reason to be *afraid of any evil tidings : our hearts will be fixed, trusting in the LORD ; and we need not fear what man can do unto us.*”

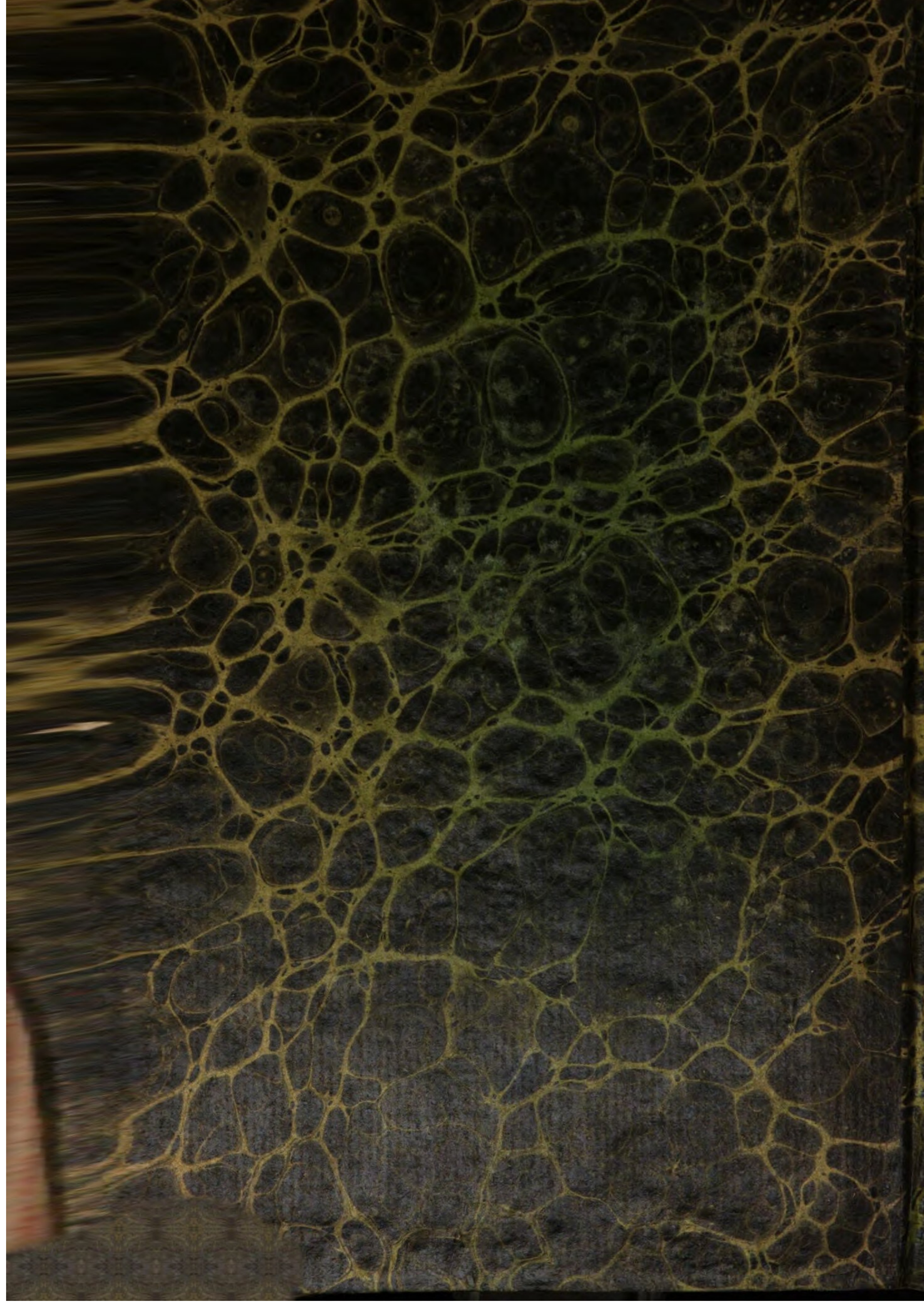
These Reflections which are taken from a Sermon of an eminent Divine†, are particularly suitable to the present times, when we are threatened with invasion and destruction by a proud and haughty foe, who hath already been sent by the ALMIGHTY *though he thinketh not so, to destroy nations not a few.*

* Psalm lxxvii. 19. † Job xxxv. 14. ‡ Dr. Blair.

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